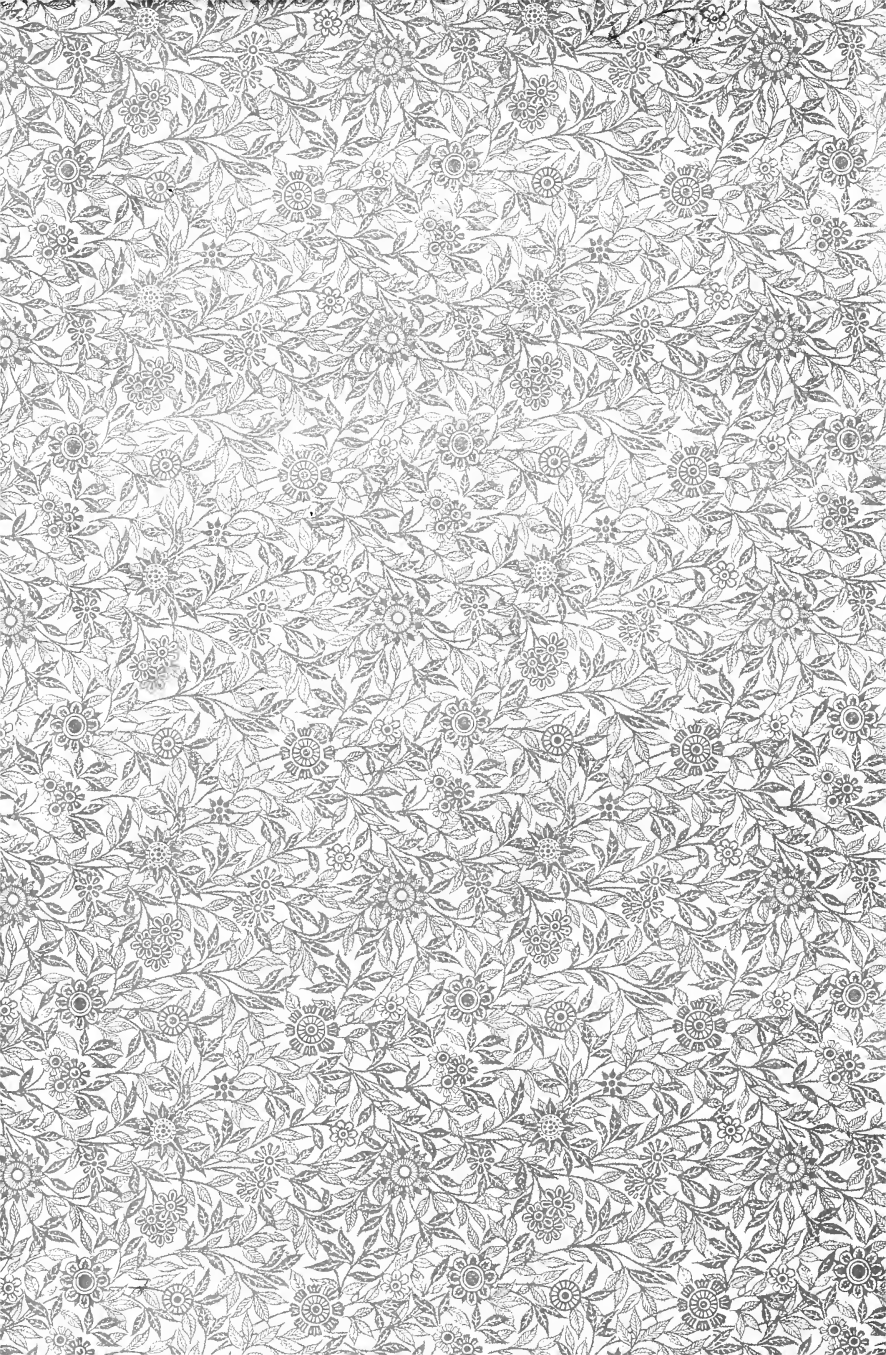
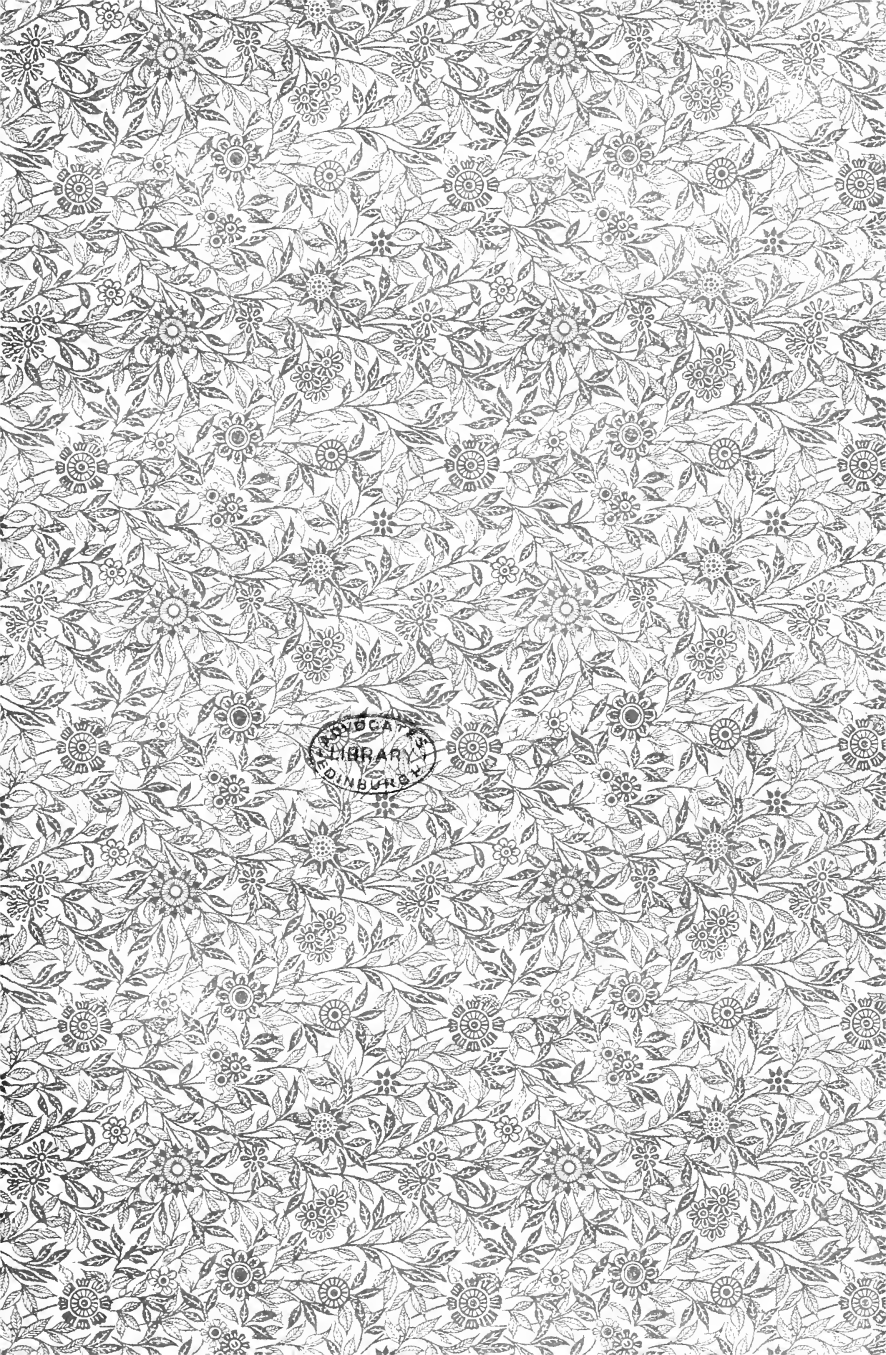


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THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER VII.

SWANSTON COTTAGE.

I HAD two views. The first was, naturally, to get clear of Edinburgh Castle and the town, to say nothing of my fellow-prisoners; the second to work to the southward so long as it was night, and be near Swanston Cottage by morning. What I should do there and then, I had no guess, and did not greatly care, being a devotee of a couple of divinities called Chance and Circumstance. Prepare, if possible: where it is impossible, work straight forward, and keep your eyes open and your tongue oiled. Wit and a good exterior—there is all life in a nutshell.

I had at first a rather chequered journey: got involved in gardens, butted into houses, and had once even the misfortune to awake a sleeping family, the father of which, as I suppose, menaced me from the window with a blunderbuss. Altogether, though I had been some time gone from my companions, I was still at no great distance, when a miserable accident put a period to the escape. Of a sudden the night was divided by a scream. This was followed by the sound of something falling, and that again by the report of a musket from the Castle battlements. It was strange to hear the alarm spread through the city. In the fortress drums were beat and a bell rung backward. On all hands the watchmen sprang their rattles. Even in that limbo or no-man's-land where I was wandering, lights were made in the houses; sashes were flung up; I could hear neighbouring families converse from window to window, and at length I was challenged myself.

"Wha's that?" cried a big voice.

I could see it proceeded from a big man in a big nightcap, leaning from a one-pair window; and as I was not yet abreast of his house, I judged it was more wise to answer. This was not the first time I had had to stake my fortunes on the goodness of my accent in a foreign tongue; and I have always found the moment inspiring, as a gambler should. Pulling around me a sort of great-coat I had made of my blanket, to cover my sulphur covered livery,—"A friend!" said I.

"What like's all this collieshangie?" said he.

I had never heard of a collieshangie in my days, but with the racket all about us in the city, I could have no doubt as to the man's meaning.

"I do not know, sir, really," said I; "but I suppose some of the prisoners will have escaped."

"Bedamned!" says he.

"Oh, sir, they will be soon taken," I replied: "it has been found in time. Good morning, sir!"

"Ye walk late, sir?" he added.

"Oh, surely not," said I, with a laugh. "Earlyish, if you like!" which brought me finally beyond him, highly pleased with my success.

I was now come forth on a good thoroughfare, which led (as well as I could judge) in my direction. It brought me almost immediately through a piece of street, whence I could hear close by the springing of a watchman's rattle, and where I suppose a sixth part of the windows would be open, and the people, in all sorts of night gear, talking with a kind of tragic gusto from one to another. Here, again, I must run the gauntlet of a half-dozen questions, the rattle all the while sounding nearer; but as I was not walking inordinately quick, as I spoke like a gentleman, and the lamps were too dim to show my dress, I carried it off once more. One person, indeed, inquired where I was off to at that hour.

I replied vaguely and cheerfully, and as I escaped at one end of this dangerous pass I could see the watchman's lantern entering by the other. I was now safe on a dark country highway, out of sight of lights and out of the fear of watchmen. And yet I had not gone above a hundred yards before a fellow made an ugly rush at me from the roadside. I avoided him with a leap, and stood on guard, cursing my empty hands, wondering whether I had to do with an officer or a mere footpad, and scarce knowing which to wish. My assailant stood a little: in the thick darkness I could see him bob and sidle as though he were feinting at me for an advantageous onfall. Then he spoke.

"My goo' frien'," says he, and at the first word I pricked my ears. "my goo' frien', will you oblishe me with lil neshary infamation? Whish roa't' Cramond?"

I laughed out clear and loud, stepped up to the convivialist, took him by the shoulders and faced him about. "My good friend," said I, "I believe I know what is best for you much better than yourself, and may God forgive you the fright you have given me! There, get you gone to Edinburgh!" And I gave him a shove, which he obeyed with the passive agility of a ball, and disappeared incontinently in the darkness down the road by which I had myself come.

Once clear of this foolish fellow, I went on again up a gradual hill, descended on the other side through the houses of a country village, and came at last to the bottom of the main ascent leading to the Pentlands and my destination. I was some way up when the fog began to lighten: a little farther, and I stepped by degrees into a clear starry night, and saw in front of me, and quite distinct, the summits of the Pentlands, and behind, the valley of the Forth and the city of my late captivity buried under a lake of vapour. I had but one encounter—that of a farm-cart, which I heard, from a great way ahead of me, creaking nearer in the night, and which passed me about the point of dawn like a thing seen in a dream, with two silent figures in the inside nodding to the horse's steps. I presume they were asleep; by the shawl about her head and shoulders, one of them should be a woman. Soon, by concurrent steps, the day began to break and the fog to subside and roll away. The east grew luminous and was barred with chilly colours, and the Castle on its rock, and the spires and chimneys of

the upper town, took gradual shape, and arose, like islands, out of the receding cloud. All about me was still and sylvan; the road mounting and winding, with nowhere a sign of any passenger, the birds chirping, I suppose for warmth, the boughs of the trees knocking together, and the red leaves falling in the wind.

It was broad day, but still bitter cold and the sun not up, when I came in view of my destination. A single gable and chimney of the cottage peeped over the shoulder of the hill; not far off, and a trifle higher on the mountain, a tall old whitewashed farmhouse stood among trees, beside a falling brook: beyond were rough hills of pasture. I bethought me that shepherd folk were early risers, and if I were once seen skulking in that neighbourhood it might prove the ruin of my prospects; took advantage of a line of hedge, and worked myself up in its shadow till I was come under the garden wall of my friends' house. The cottage was a little quaint place of many rough-cast gables and grey roofs. It had something the air of a rambling infinitesimal cathedral, the body of it rising in the midst two storeys high, with a steep-pitched roof, and sending out upon all hands (as it were chapter-houses, chapels, and transepts) one-storeyed and dwarfish projections. To add to this appearance, it was grotesquely decorated with crockets and gargoyles, ravished from some mediæval church. The place seemed hidden away, being not only concealed in the trees of the garden, but, on the side on which I approached it, buried as high as the eaves by the rising of the ground. About the walls of the garden there went a line of well-grown elms and beeches, the first entirely bare, the last still pretty well covered with red leaves, and the centre was occupied with a thicket of laurel and holly, in which I could see arches cut and paths winding.

I was now within hail of my friends, and not much the better. The house appeared asleep; yet if I attempted to wake any one, I had no guarantee it might not prove either the aunt with the gold eyeglasses (whom I could only remember with trembling), or some ass of a servant-maid who should burst out screaming at sight of me. Higher up I could hear and see a shepherd shouting to his dogs and striding on the rough sides of the mountain, and it was clear I must get to cover without loss of time. No doubt the holly thickets would have proved a very suitable retreat, but there was mounted on the wall a sort of signboard not uncommon in the country of Great Britain, and very damping to the adventurous: SPRING GUNS AND MAN-TRAPS was the legend that it bore. I have learned since that these advertisements, three times out of four, were in the nature of Quaker guns on a disarmed battery, but I had not learned it then, and even so, the odds would not have been good enough. For a choice, I would a hundred times sooner be returned to Edinburgh Castle and my corner in the bastion, than to leave my foot in a steel trap or have to digest the contents of an automatic blunderbuss. There was but one chance left—that Ronald or Flora might be the first to come abroad; and in order to profit by this chance if it occurred, I got me on the cope of the wall in a place where it was screened by the thick branches of a beech, and sat there waiting.

As the day wore on, the sun came very pleasantly out. I had been awake all night, I had undergone the most violent agitations of mind and body, and it is not so much to be wondered at, as it was exceedingly unwise and foolhardy, that I should have dropped into a doze. From this I awakened to the characteristic sound of digging, looked down, and saw immediately below me the back view of a gardener in a stable waistcoat. Now he would appear steadily immersed in his business; anon, to my more immediate terror, he would straighten his back, stretch his arms, gaze about the otherwise deserted garden, and relish a deep pinch of snuff. It was my first thought to drop from the wall upon the other side. A



*"Strolling hitherward . . .
pausing and visiting her
flowers—herself as fair."*

glance sufficed to show me that even the way by which I had come was now cut off, and the field behind me already occupied by a couple of shepherds' assistants and a score or two of sheep. I have named the talismans on which I habitually depend, but here was a conjuncture in which both were wholly useless. The copestone of a wall arrayed with broken bottles is no favourable rostrum; and I might be as eloquent as Pitt, and as fascinating as Richelieu, and neither the gardener nor the shepherd lads would care a halfpenny. In short, there was no

escape possible from my absurd position : there I must continue to sit until one or other of my neighbours should raise his eyes and give the signal for my capture.

The part of the wall on which (for my sins) I was posted could be scarce less than twelve feet high on the inside; the leaves of the beech which made a fashion of sheltering me were already partly fallen; and I was thus not only perilously exposed myself, but enabled to command some part of the garden walks and (under an evergreen arch) the front lawn and windows of the cottage. For long nothing stirred except my friend with the spade; then I heard the opening of a sash; and presently after saw Miss Flora appear in a morning wrapper and come strolling hitherward between the borders, pausing and visiting her flowers—herself as fair. *There* was a friend; *here*, immediately beneath me, an unknown quantity—the gardener: how to communicate with the one and not attract the notice of the other? To make a noise was out of the question; I dared scarce to breathe. I held myself ready to make a gesture as soon as she should look, and she looked in every possible direction but the one. She was interested in the vilest tuft of chickweed, she gazed at the summit of the mountain, she came even immediately below me and conversed on the most fastidious topics with the gardener; but to the top of that wall she would not dedicate a glance! At last she began to retrace her steps in the direction of the cottage; whereupon, becoming quite desperate, I broke off a piece of plaster, took a happy aim, and hit her with it in the nape of the neck. She clapped her hand to the place, turned about, looked on all sides for an explanation, and spying me (as indeed I was parting the branches to make it the more easy), half uttered and half swallowed down again a cry of surprise.

The infernal gardener was erect upon the instant. "What's your wull, miss?" said he.

Her readiness amazed me. She had already turned and was gazing in the opposite direction. "There's a child among the artichokes," she said.

"The Plagues of Egypt! I'll see to them!" cried the gardener truculently, and with a hurried waddle disappeared among the evergreens.

That moment she turned, she came running towards me, her arms stretched out, her face incarnadined for the one moment with heavenly blushes, the next pale as death. "Monsieur de Saint-Yves!" she said.

"My dear young lady," I said, "this is the damndest liberty—I know it! But what else was I to do?"

"You have escaped?" said she.

"If you call this escape," I replied.

"But you cannot possibly stop there!" she cried.

"I know it," said I. "And where am I to go?"

She struck her hands together. "I have it!" she exclaimed. "Come down by the beech trunk—you must leave no footprint in the border—quickly, before Robie can get back! I am the hen-wife here: I keep the key; you must go into the hen-house—for the moment."

I was by her side at once. Both cast a hasty glance at the blank windows of the cottage and so much as was visible of the garden alleys; it seemed there was none to observe us. She caught me by the sleeve and ran. It was no time for compliments; hurry breathed upon our necks; and I ran along with her to the next corner of the garden, where a wired court and a board hovel standing in a grove of trees advertised my place of refuge. She thrust me in without a word; the bulk of the fowls were at the same time emitted; and I found myself the next moment locked in alone with half a dozen sitting hens. In the twilight of the place all fixed their eyes on me severely, and seemed to upbraid me with

some crying impropriety. Doubtless the hen has always a puritanic appearance, although (in its own behaviour) I could never observe it to be more particular than its neighbours. But conceive a British hen!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEN-HOUSE.

I WAS half an hour at least in the society of these distressing bipeds, and alone with my own reflections and necessities. I was in great pain of my flayed hands, and had nothing to treat them with; I was hungry and thirsty, and had nothing to eat or to drink: I was thoroughly tired, and there was no place for me to sit. To be sure there was the floor, but nothing could be imagined less inviting.

At the sound of approaching footsteps, my good-humour was restored. The key rattled in the lock, and Master Ronald entered, closed the door behind him, and leaned his back to it.

"I say, you know!" he said, and shook a sullen young head.

"I know it's a liberty," said I.

"It's infernally awkward: my position is infernally embarrassing," said he.

"Well," said I, "and what do you think of mine?"

This seemed to pose him entirely, and he remained gazing upon me with a convincing air of youth and innocence. I could have laughed, but I was not so inhumane.

"I am in your hands," said I, with a little gesture. "You must do with me what you think right."

"Ah, yes!" he cried: "if I knew!"

"You see," said I, "it would be different if you had received your commission. Properly speaking, you are not yet a combatant: I have ceased to be one; and I think it arguable that we are just in the position of one ordinary gentleman to another, where friendship usually comes before the law. Observe, I only say *arguable*. For God's sake, don't think I wish to dictate an opinion. These are the sort of nasty little businesses, inseparable from war, which every gentleman must decide for himself. If I were in your place——"

"Ay, what would you do, then?" says he.

"Upon my word, I do not know," said I. "Hesitate, as you are doing, I believe."

"I will tell you," he said. "I have a kinsman, and it is what *he* would think, that I am thinking. It is General Graham of Lynedoch—Sir Thomas Graham. I scarcely know him, but I believe I admire him more than I do God."

"I admire him a good deal myself," said I, "and have good reason to. I have fought with him, been beaten, and run away. *Veni, victus sum, erasi.*"

"What!" he cried. "You were at Barossa?"

"There and back, which many could not say," said I. "It was a pretty affair and a hot one, and the Spaniards behaved abominably, as they usually did in a pitched field; the Marshal Duke of Belluno made a fool of himself, and not for the first time; and your friend Sir Thomas had the best of it, so far as there was any best. He is a brave and ready officer."

"Now, then, you will understand!" said the boy. "I wish to please Sir Thomas: what would he do?"

"Well, I can tell you a story," said I, "a true one too, and about this very combat of Chiclana, or Barossa as you call it. I was in the Eighth of the Line; we lost the eagle of the First Battalion, more betoken, but it cost you dear. Well, we had repulsed more charges than I care to count, when your 87th Regiment came on at a foot's pace, very slow but very steady: in front of them a mounted

officer, his hat in his hand, white-haired, and talking very quietly to the battalions. Our Major, Vigo-Roussillon, set spurs to his horse and galloped out to sabre him, but seeing him an old man, very handsome, and as composed as if he were in a coffee-house, lost heart and galloped back again. Only, you see, they had been very close together for the moment, and looked each other in the eyes. Soon after the Major was wounded, taken prisoner, and carried into Cadiz. One fine day they announced to him the visit of the General, Sir Thomas Graham. 'Well, sir,' said the General, taking him by the hand, 'I think we were face to face upon the field.' It was the white-haired officer!"

"Ah!" cried the boy,—his eyes were burning.

"Well, and here is the point," I continued. "Sir Thomas fed the Major from his own table from that day, and served him with six covers."

"Yes, it is a beautiful—a beautiful story," said Ronald. "And yet somehow it is not the same—is it?"

"I admit it freely," said I.

The boy stood awhile brooding. "Well, I take my risk of it," he cried. "I believe it's treason to my sovereign—I believe there is an infamous punishment for such a crime—and yet I'm hanged if I can give you up."

I was as much moved as he. "I could almost beg you to do otherwise," I said. "I was a brute to come to you, a brute and a coward. You are a noble enemy; you will make a noble soldier." And with rather a happy idea of a compliment for this warlike youth, I stood up straight and gave him the salute.

He was for a moment confused; his face flushed. "Well, well, I must be getting you something to eat, but it will not be for six," he added, with a smile: "only what we can get smuggled out. There is my aunt in the road, you see," and he locked me in again with the indignant hens.

I always smile when I recall that young fellow; and yet, if the reader were to smile also, I should feel ashamed. If my son shall be only like him when he comes to that age, it will be a brave day for me and not a bad one for France.

At the same time I cannot pretend that I was sorry when his sister succeeded in his place. She brought me a few crusts of bread and a jug of milk, which she had handsomely laced with whisky after the Scottish manner.

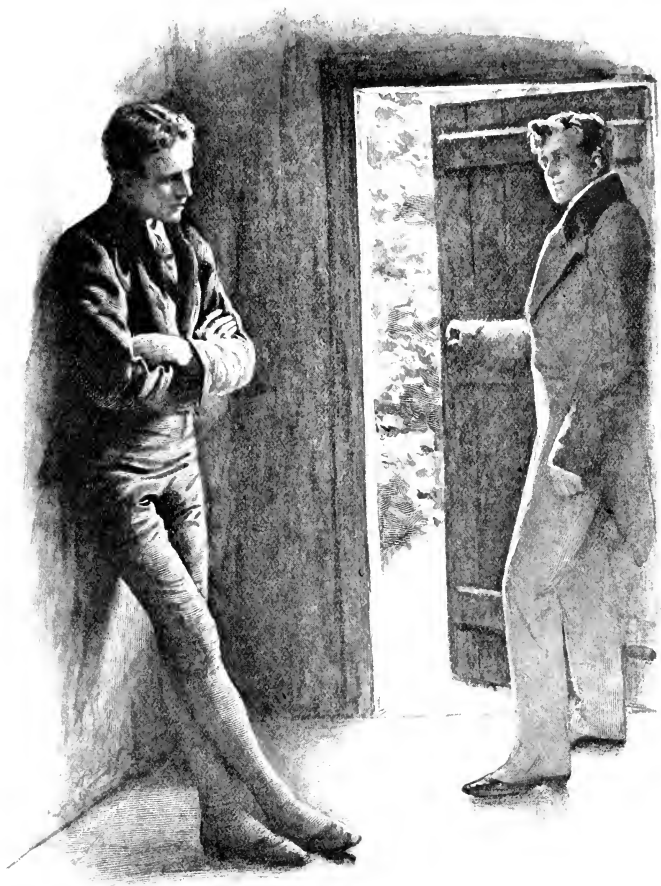
"I am so sorry," she said: "I dared not bring you anything more. We are so small a family, and my aunt keeps such an eye upon the servants. I have put some whisky in the milk—it is more wholesome so—and with eggs you will be able to make something of a meal. How many eggs will you be wanting to that milk? for I must be taking the others to my aunt—that is my excuse for being here. I should think three or four. Do you know how to beat them in? or shall I do it?"

Willing to detain her a while longer in the hen-house, I displayed my bleeding palms; at which she cried out aloud.

"My dear Miss Flora, you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs," said I; "and it is no bagatelle to escape from Edinburgh Castle. One of us, I think, was even killed."

"And you are as white as a rag, too," she exclaimed, "and can hardly stand! Here is my shawl, sit down upon it here in the corner, and I will beat your eggs. See, I have brought a fork too; I should have been a good person to take care of Jacobites or Covenanters in old days! You shall have more to eat this evening; Ronald is to bring it you from town. We have money enough, although no food that we can call our own. Ah, if Ronald and I kept house, you should not be lying in this shed! He admires you so much."

"My dear friend," said I, "for God's sake do not embarrass me with more alms.



"Well, I must be getting you something to eat."

I loved to receive them from that hand, so long as they were needed; but they are so no more, and whatever else I may lack—and I lack everything—it is not money." I pulled out my sheaf of notes and detached the top one: it was written for ten pounds, and signed by that very famous individual, Abraham Newlands. "Oblige me, as you would like me to oblige your brother if the parts were reversed, and take this note for the expenses. I shall need not only food, but clothes."

"Lay it on the ground," said she. "I must not stop my beating."

"You are not offended?" I exclaimed.

She answered me by a look that was a reward in itself, and seemed to imply

the most heavenly offers for the future. There was in it a shadow of reproach, and such warmth of communicative cordiality as left me speechless. I watched her instead till her hens' milk was ready.

"Now," said she, "taste that."

I did so, and swore it was nectar. She collected her eggs and crouched in front of me to watch me eat. There was about this tall young lady at the moment an air of motherliness delicious to behold. I am like the English general, and to this day I still wonder at my moderation.

"What sort of clothes will you be wanting?" said she.

"The clothes of a gentleman," said I. "Right or wrong, I think it is the part I am best qualified to play. Mr. St. Ives (for that's to be my name upon the journey) I conceive as rather a theatrical figure, and his make-up should be to match."

"And yet there is a difficulty," said she. "If you got coarse clothes the fit would hardly matter. But the clothes of a fine gentleman—oh, it is absolutely necessary that these should fit! And above all, with your"—she paused a moment—"to our ideas somewhat noticeable manners."

"Alas for my poor manners!" said I. "But, my dear friend Flora, these little noticeable things are just what mankind has to suffer under. Yourself, you see, you're very noticeable even when you come in a crowd to visit poor prisoners in the Castle."

I was afraid I should frighten my good angel visitant away, and without the smallest breath of pause went on to add a few directions as to stuffs and colours.

She opened big eyes upon me. "Oh, Mr. St. Ives!" she cried—"if that is to be your name—I do not say they would not be becoming; but for a journey, do you think they would be wise? I am afraid"—she gave a pretty break of laughter—"I am afraid they would be daft-like!"

"Well, and am I not daft?" I asked her.

"I do begin to think you are," said she.

"There it is, then!" said I. "I have been long enough a figure of fun. Can you not feel with me that perhaps the bitterest thing in this captivity has been the clothes? Make me a captive—bind me with chains if you like—but let me be still myself. You do not know what it is to be a walking travesty—among foes," I added, bitterly.

"Oh, but you are too unjust!" she cried. "You speak as though any one ever dreamed of laughing at you. But no one did. We were all pained to the heart. Even my aunt—though sometimes I do think she was not quite in good taste—you should have seen her and heard her at home! She took so much interest. Every patch in your clothes made us sorry; it should have been a sister's work."

"That is what I never had—a sister," said I. "But since you say that I did not make you laugh——"

"Oh, Mr. St. Ives! never!" she exclaimed. "Not for one moment. It was all too sad. To see a gentleman——"

"In the clothes of a harlequin, and begging?" I suggested.

"To see a gentleman in distress, and nobly supporting it," she said.

"And do you not understand, my fair foe," said I, "that even if all were as you say—even if you had thought my travesty were becoming—I should be only the more anxious, for my sake, for my country's sake, and for the sake of your kindness, that you should see him whom you have helped as God meant him to be seen? that you should have something to remember him by at least more characteristic than a misfitting sulphur-yellow suit, and half a week's beard?"

"You think a great deal too much of clothes," she said. "I am not that kind of girl."

"And I am afraid I am that kind of a man," said I. "But do not think of me too harshly for that. I talked just now of something to remember by. I have many of them myself, of these beautiful reminders, of these keepsakes, that I cannot be parted from until I lose memory and life. Many of them are great things, many of them are high virtues—charity, mercy, faith. But some of them are trivial enough. Miss Flora, do you remember the day that I first saw you, the day of the strong east wind? Miss Flora, shall I tell you what you wore?"

We had both risen to our feet, and she had her hand already on the door to go. Perhaps this attitude emboldened me to profit by the last seconds of our interview; and it certainly rendered her escape the more easy.

"Oh, you are too romantic!" she said, laughing; and with that my sun was blown out, my enchantress had fled away, and I was again left alone in the twilight with the lady hens.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE IS COMPANY, AND FOUR NONE.

THE rest of the day I slept in the corner of the hen-house upon Flora's shawl. Nor did I awake until a light shone suddenly in my eyes, and starting up with a gasp (for, indeed, at the moment I dreamed I was still swinging from the Castle battlements) I found Ronald bending over me with a lantern. It appeared it was past midnight, that I had slept about sixteen hours, and that Flora had returned her poultry to the shed and I had heard her not. I could not but wonder if she had stooped to look at me as I slept. The puritan hens now slept irremediably; and being cheered with the promise of supper I wished them an ironical good-night, and was lighted across the garden and noiselessly admitted to a bedroom on the ground floor of the cottage. There I found soap, water, razors—offered me diffidently by my beardless host—and an outfit of new clothes. To be shaved again without depending on the barber of the gaol was a source of a delicious, if a childish joy. My hair was sadly too long, but I was none so unwise as to make an attempt on it myself. And, indeed, I thought it did not wholly misbecome me as it was, being by nature curly. The clothes were about as good as I expected. The waistcoat was of toilet, a pretty piece, the trousers of fine kerseymere, and the coat sat extraordinarily well. Altogether, when I beheld this changeling in the glass, I kissed my hand to him.

"My dear fellow," said I, "have you no scent?"

"Good God, no!" cried Ronald. "What do you want of scent?"

"Capital thing on a campaign," said I. "But I can do without."

I was now led, with the same precautions against noise, into the little bow-windowed dining-room of the cottage. The shutters were up, the lamp guiltily turned low; the beautiful Flora greeted me in a whisper; and when I was set down to table, the pair proceeded to help me with precautions that might have seemed excessive in the Ear of Dionysius.

"She sleeps up there," observed the boy, pointing to the ceiling; and the knowledge that I was so imminently near to the resting-place of that gold eyeglass touched even myself with some uneasiness.

Our excellent youth had imported from the city a meat pie, and I was glad to find it flanked with a decanter of really admirable wine of Oporto. While I ate, Ronald entertained me with the news of the city, which had naturally rung all day with our escape: troops and mounted messengers had followed each other forth at all hours and in all directions; but according to the last intelligence no recapture

had been made. Opinion in town was very favourable to us: our courage was applauded, and many professed regret that our ultimate chance of escape should be so small. The man who had fallen was one Sombref, a peasant; he was one who slept in a different part of the Castle; and I was thus assured that the whole of my former companions had attained their liberty, and Shed A was untenanted.

From this we wandered insensibly into other topics. It is impossible to exaggerate the pleasure I took to be thus sitting at the same table with Flora, in the clothes of a gentleman, at liberty and in the full possession of my spirits and resources; of all of which I had need, because it was necessary that I should support at the same time two opposite characters, and at once play the cavalier and lively soldier for the eyes of Ronald, and to the ears of Flora maintain the same profound and sentimental note that I had already sounded. Certainly there are days when all goes well with a man; when his wit, his digestion, his mistress are in a conspiracy to spoil him, and even the weather smiles upon his wishes. I will only say of myself upon that evening that I surpassed my expectations, and was privileged to delight my hosts. Little by little they forgot their terrors and I my caution; until at last we were brought back to earth by a catastrophe that might very easily have been foreseen, but was not the less astonishing to us when it occurred.

I had filled all the glasses. "I have a toast to propose," I whispered, "or rather three, but all so inextricably interwoven that they will not bear dividing. I wish first to drink to the health of a brave and therefore a generous enemy. He found me disarmed, a fugitive and helpless. Like the lion, he disdained so poor a triumph; and when he might have vindicated an easy valour, he preferred to make a friend. I wish that we should next drink to a fairer and a more tender foe. She found me in prison; she cheered me with a priceless sympathy; what she has done since, I know she has done in mercy, and I only pray—I dare scarce hope—her mercy may prove to have been merciful. And I wish to conjoin with these, for the first and perhaps the last time, the health—and I fear I may already say the memory—of one who has fought, not always without success, against the soldiers of your nation; but who came here, vanquished already, only to be vanquished again by the loyal hand of the one, by the unforgettable eyes of the other."

It is to be feared I may have lent at times a certain resonancy to my voice; it is to be feared that Ronald, who was none the better for his own hospitality, may have set down his glass with something of a clang. Whatever may have been the cause, at least, I had scarce finished my compliment before we were aware of a thump upon the ceiling overhead. It was to be thought some very solid body had descended to the floor from the level (possibly) of a bed. I have never seen consternation painted in more lively colours than on the faces of my hosts. It was proposed to smuggle me forth into the garden, or to conceal my form under a horsehair sofa which stood against the wall. For the first expedient, as was now plain by the approaching footsteps, there was no longer time; from the second I recoiled with indignation.

"My dear creatures," said I, "let us die, but do not let us be ridiculous."

The words were still upon my lips when the door opened and my friend of the gold eyeglass appeared, a memorable figure, on the threshold. In one hand she bore a bedroom candlestick; in the other, with the steadiness of a dragoon, a horse-pistol. She was wound about in shawls which did not wholly conceal the candid fabric of her nightdress, and surmounted by a nightcap of portentous architecture. Thus accoutred, she made her entrance; laid down the candle and pistol, as no longer called for; looked about the room with a silence more eloquent

than oaths; and then, in a thrilling voice—"To whom have I the pleasure?" she said, addressing me with a ghost of a bow.

"Madam, I am charmed, I am sure," said I. "The story is a little long; and our meeting, however welcome, was for the moment entirely unexpected by myself. I am sure—" but here I found I was quite sure of nothing, and tried again. "I have the honour," I began, and found I had the honour to be only exceedingly confused. With that, I threw myself outright upon her mercy. "Madam, I must be more frank with you," I resumed. "You have already proved your charity and compassion for the French prisoners. I am one of these; and if my appearance be not too much changed, you may even yet recognise in me that *Oddity* who had the good fortune more than once to make you smile."

Still gazing upon me through her glass, she uttered an unpromising grunt; and then, turning to her niece—"Flora," said she, "how comes he here?"

The culprits poured out for a while an antiphony of explanations, which died out at last in a miserable silence.

"I think at least you might have told your aunt," she snorted.

"Madam," I interposed, "they were about to do so. It is my fault if it be not done already. But I made it my prayer that your slumbers might be respected, and this necessary formula of my presentation should be delayed until to-morrow in the morning."

The old lady regarded me with undissembled incredulity, to which I was able to find no better repartee than a profound and I trust graceful reverence.

"French prisoners are very well in their place," she said, "but I cannot see that their place is in my private dining-room."

"Madam," said I, "I hope it may be said without offence, but (except the Castle of Edinburgh) I cannot think upon the spot from which I would so readily be absent."

At this, to my relief, I thought I could perceive a vestige of a smile to steal upon that iron countenance and to be bitten immediately in.



"In one hand she bore a bedroom candlestick,
... in the other a horse-pistol."

"And if it is a fair question, what do they call ye?" she asked.

"At your service, the Vicomte Anne de St-Yves," said I.

"Mosha the Viscount," said she, "I am afraid you do us plain people a great deal too much honour."

"My dear lady," said I, "let us be serious for a moment. What was I to do? Where was I to go? And how can you be angry with these benevolent children, who took pity on one so unfortunate as myself? Your humble servant is no such terrific adventurer that you should come out against him with horse-pistols and"—smiling—"bedroom candlesticks. It is but a young gentleman in extreme distress, hunted upon every side, and asking no more than to escape from his pursuers. I know your character, I read it in your face"—the heart trembled in my body as I said these daring words. "There are unhappy English prisoners in France at this day, perhaps at this hour. Perhaps at this hour they kneel as I do; they take the hand of her who might conceal or assist them; they press it to their lips as I do——"

"Here, here!" cried the old lady, breaking from my solicitations. "Behave yourself before folk! Saw ever any one the match of that? And on earth, my dears, what are we to do with him?"

"Pack him off, my dear lady," said I: "pack off the impudent fellow double-quick! And if it may be, and your good heart allows it, help him a little on the way he has to go."

"What's this pie?" she cried stridently. "Where is this pie from, Flora?"

No answer was vouchsafed by my unfortunate and (I may say) extinct accomplices.

"Is that my port?" she pursued. "Hough! Will somebody give me a glass of my port wine?"

I made haste to serve her.

She looked at me over the rim with an extraordinary expression. "I hope ye liked it?" said she.

"It is even a magnificent wine," said I.

"Awell, it was my father laid it down," she said. "There were few knew more about port wine than my father, God rest him!" She settled herself in a chair with an alarming air of resolution. "And so there is some particular direction that you wish to go in?" said she.

"Oh," said I, following her example, "I am by no means such a vagrant as you suppose. I have good friends, if I could get to them, for which all I want is to be once clear of Scotland; and I have money for the road." And I produced my bundle.

"English bank-notes?" she said. "That's not very handy for Scotland. It's been some fool of an Englishman that's given you these, I'm thinking. How much is it?"

"I declare to heaven I never thought to count!" I exclaimed. "But that is soon remedied."

And I counted out ten notes of ten pound each, all in the name of Abraham Newlands, and five bills of country bankers for as many guineas.

"One hundred and twenty-six pound five," cried the old lady. "And you carry such a sum about you, and have not so much as counted it! If you are not a thief, you must allow you are very thief-like."

"And yet, madam, the money is legitimately mine," said I.

She took one of the bills and held it up. "Is there any probability, now, that this could be traced?" she asked.

"None, I should suppose; and if it were, it would be no matter," said I. "With your usual penetration, you guessed right. An Englishman brought it me. It reached me, through the hands of his English solicitor, from my great-uncle, the Comte de Kéroural de Saint-Yves, I believe the richest *émigré* in London."

"I can do no more than take your word for it," said she.

"And I trust, madam, not less," said I.

"Well," said she, "at this rate the matter may be feasible. I will cash one of these five-guinea bills, less the exchange, and give you silver and Scots notes to bear you as far as the border. Beyond that, Mosha the Viscount, you will have to depend upon yourself."

"I could not but express a civil hesitation as to whether the amount would suffice, in my case, for so long a journey."

"Ay," said she, "but you haven't heard me out. For if you are not too fine a gentleman to travel with a pair of drovers, I believe I have found the very thing, and the Lord forgive me for a treasonable old wife! There are a couple stopping up by with the shepherd-man at the farm; to-morrow they will take the road for England, probably by skriegh of day—and in my opinion you had best be travelling with the stots," said she.

"For Heaven's sake do not suppose me to be so effeminate a character!" I cried. "An old soldier of Napoleon is certainly beyond suspicion. But, dear lady, to what end? and how is the society of these excellent gentlemen supposed to help me?"

"My dear sir," said she, "you do not at all understand your own predicament, and must just leave your matters in the hands of those who do. I daresay you have never even heard tell of the drove-roads or the drovers; and I am certainly not going to sit up all night to explain it to you. Suffice it, that it is me who is arranging this affair—the more shame to me!—and that is the way ye have to go. Ronald," she continued, "away up-by to the shepherds; rowst them out of their beds, and make it perfectly distinct that Sim is not to leave till he has seen *me*."

Ronald was nothing loath to escape from his aunt's neighbourhood, and left the room and the cottage with a silent expedition that was more like flight than mere obedience. Meanwhile the old lady turned to her niece.

"And I would like to know what we are to do with him the night!" she cried.

"Ronald and I meant to put him in the hen-house," said the encrimsoned Flora.

"And I can tell you he is to go to no such a place," replied the aunt. "Hen-house, indeed! If a guest he is to be, he shall sleep in no mortal henhouse. Your room is the most fit, I think, if he will consent to occupy it on so great a sudden. And as for you, Flora, you shall sleep with me."

I could not help admiring the prudence and tact of this old dowager, and of course it was not for me to make objections. Ere I well knew how, I was alone with a flat candlestick, which is not the most sympathetic of companions, and stood studying the snuff in a frame of mind between triumph and chagrin. All had gone well with my flight: the masterful lady who had arrogated to herself the arrangement of the details gave me every confidence; and I saw myself already arriving at my uncle's door. But, alas! it was another story with my love affair. I had seen and spoken with her alone; I had ventured boldly; I had been not ill received; I had seen her change colour, had enjoyed the undissembled kindness of her eyes; and now, in a moment, down comes upon the scene that apocalyptic figure with the nightcap and the horse-pistol, and with the very wind of her coming behold me separated from my love! Gratitude and admiration

contended in my breast with the extreme of natural rancour. My appearance in her house at past midnight had an air (I could not disguise it from myself) that was insolent and underhand, and could not but minister to the worst suspicions. And the old lady had taken it well. Her generosity was no more to be called in question than her courage, and I was afraid that her intelligence would be found to match. Certainly, Miss Flora had to support some shrewd looks, and certainly she had been troubled. I could see but the one way before me: to profit by an excellent bed, to try to sleep soon, to be stirring early, and to hope for some renewed occasion in the morning. To have said so much and yet to say no more, to go out into the world upon so half-hearted a parting, was more than I could accept.

It is my belief that the benevolent fiend sat up all night to baulk me. She was at my bedside with a candle long ere day, roused me, laid out for me a damnable misfit of clothes, and bade me pack my own (which were wholly unsuited to the journey) in a bundle. Sore grudging, I arrayed myself in a suit of some country fabric, as delicate as sackcloth and about as becoming as a shroud; and, on coming forth, found the dragon had prepared for me a hearty breakfast. She took the head of the table, poured out the tea, and entertained me as I ate with a great deal of good sense and a conspicuous lack of charm. How often did I not regret the change!—how often compare her, and condemn her in the comparison, with her charming niece! But if my entertainer was not beautiful, she had certainly been busy in my interest. Already she was in communication with my destined fellow-travellers; and the device on which she had struck appeared entirely suitable. I was a young Englishman who had outrun the constable; warrants were out against me in Scotland, and it had become needful I should pass the border without loss of time, and privately.

"I have given a very good account of you," said she, "which I hope you may justify. I told them there was nothing against you beyond the fact that you were put to the haw (if that is the right word) for debt."

"I pray God you have the expression incorrectly, ma'am," said I. "I do not give myself out for a person easily alarmed; but you must admit there is something barbarous and mediæval in the sound well qualified to startle a poor foreigner."

"It is the name of a process in Scots Law, and need alarm no honest man," said she. "But you are a very idle-minded young gentleman; you must still have your joke, I see: I only hope you will have no cause to regret it."

"I pray you not to suppose, because I speak lightly, that I do not feel deeply," said I. "Your kindness has quite conquered me: I lay myself at your disposition, I beg you to believe, with real tenderness; I pray you to consider me from henceforth as the most devoted of your friends."

"Well, well," she said, "here comes your devoted friend the drover. I'm thinking he will be eager for the road; and I will not be easy myself till I see you well off the premises, and the dishes washed, before my servant-woman wakes. Praise God, we have gotten one that is a treasure all the sleeping!"

The morning was already beginning to be blue in the trees of the garden, and to put to shame the candle by which I had breakfasted. The lady rose from table, and I had no choice but to follow her example. All the time I was beating my brains for any means by which I should be able to get a word apart with Flora, or find the time to write her a billet. The windows had been open while I breakfasted, I suppose to ventilate the room for any traces of my passage there; and, Master Ronald appearing on the front lawn, my ogre leaned forth to address him.

"Ronald," she said, "wasn't that Sim that went by the wall?"

I snatched my advantage. Right at her back there was pen, ink, and paper laid out. I wrote: "I love you"; and before I had time to write more, or so much as to blot what I had written, I was again under the guns of the gold eyeglasses.

"It's time," she began; and then, as she observed my occupation, "Umph!" she broke off. "Ye have something to write?" she demanded.

"Some notes, madam," said I, bowing with alacrity.

"Notes," she said; "or a note?"

"There is doubtless some *finesse* of the English language that I do not comprehend," said I.

"I'll contrive, however, to make my meaning very plain to ye, Mosha le Viscount," she continued. "I suppose you desire to be considered a gentleman?"

"Can you doubt it, madam?" said I.

"I doubt very much, at least, whether you go to the right way about it," she said. "You have come here to me, I cannot very well say how; I think you will admit you owe me some thanks, if it was only for the breakfast I made ye. But what are you to me? A waif young man, not so far to seek for looks and manners, with some English notes in your pocket and a price upon your head. I am a lady: I have been your hostess, with however little will; and I desire that this random acquaintance of yours with my family will cease and determine."

I believe I must have coloured. "Madam," said I, "the notes are of no importance; and your least pleasure ought certainly to be my law. You have felt, and you have been pleased to express, a doubt of me. I tear them up." Which you may be sure I did thoroughly.

"There's a good lad!" said the dragon, and immediately led the way to the front lawn.

The brother and sister were both waiting us here, and, as well as I could make out in the imperfect light, bore every appearance of having passed through a rather cruel experience. Ronald seemed ashamed to so much as catch my eye in the presence of his aunt, and was the picture of embarrassment. As for Flora, she had scarce the time to cast me one look before the dragon took her by the arm, and began to march across the garden in the extreme first glimmer of the dawn without exchanging speech. Ronald and I followed in equal silence.

There was a door in that same high wall on the top of which I had sat perched no longer gone than yesterday morning. This the old lady set open with a key; and on the other side we were aware of a rough-looking, thick-set man, leaning with his arms (through which was passed a formidable staff) on a dry-stone dyke. Him the old lady immediately addressed.

"Sim," said she, "this is the young gentleman."

Sim replied with an inarticulate grumble of sound, and a movement of one arm and his head, which did duty for a salutation.

"Now, Mr. St. Ives," said the old lady, "it's high time for you to be taking the road. But first of all let me give the change of your five-guinea bill. Here are four pounds of it in British Linen notes, and the balance in small silver, less sixpence. Some charge a shilling, I believe, but I have given you the benefit of the doubt. See and guide it with all the sense that you possess."

"And here, Mr. St. Ives," said Flora, speaking for the first time, "is a plaid which you will find quite necessary on so rough a journey. I hope you will take it from the hands of a Scotch friend," she added, and her voice trembled.

"Genuine holly: I cut it myself," said Ronald, and gave me as good a cudgel as a man could wish for in a row.

The formality of these gifts, and the waiting figure of the driver, told me loudly

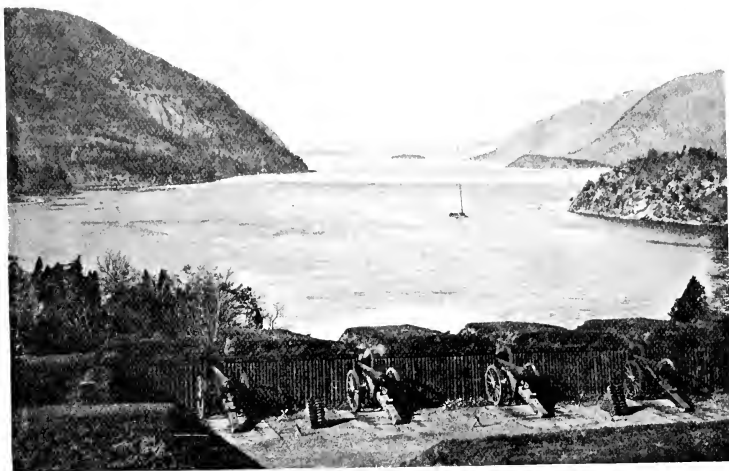


"A rough-looking, thick-set man."

that I must be gone. I dropped on one knee and bade farewell to the aunt, kissing her hand. I did the like—but with how different a passion!—to her niece: as for the boy, I took him to my arms and embraced him with a cordiality that seemed to strike him speechless. "Farewell!" and "Farewell!" I said. "I shall never forget my friends. Keep me sometimes in memory. Farewell!" With that I turned my back and began to walk away; and had scarce done so, when I heard the door in the high wall close behind me. Of course this was the aunt's doing; and of course, if I know anything of human character, she would not let me go without some tart expressions. I declare, even if I had heard them, I should not have minded in the least, for I was quite persuaded that, whatever admirers I might be leaving behind me in Swanston Cottage, the aunt was not the least sincere.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(To be continued.)



CADET LIFE AT WEST POINT.*



HERE is probably not a more democratic institution in the world than the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Each representative in Congress is empowered to appoint a cadet from his congressional district; and though the lower House of Congress is considered representative of the American people, surely their appointees to the Military Academy are more so. The House of Representatives is composed of politicians; but their candidates to the Military Academy, being most often chosen by competitive examination, are from all walks of life, and one has only to see them drawn up in line, when they report for their entrance examination, to unhesitatingly pronounce them the most heterogeneous and ununiform lot imaginable. The well-dressed city youth is alongside the boy from the farm, and both look as awkward as possible in their attempts to assume an erect and military carriage, to which they have not been trained and for which their clothing was decidedly not cut. Their crudeness is exaggerated by contrast with the trim and graceful bearing of those who have preceded them into the ranks of the cadet battalion, and who now look down upon the new-comers, or "beasts," from a height probably appreciated by no one more fully than by the "beasts" themselves. Well does the writer remember the first cadet that he saw on reporting at the Academy as a candidate. Ascending the steps of the headquarters building, he met this young military god descending:

* See "Sandhurst," in preceding number.



THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER X.

THE DROVERS.

IT took me a little effort to come abreast of my new companion ; for though he walked with an ugly roll and no great appearance of speed, he could cover the ground at a good rate when he wanted to. Each looked at the other : I with natural curiosity, he with a great appearance of distaste. I have heard since that his heart was entirely set against me ; he had seen me kneel to the ladies, and diagnosed me for a “gesterin’ eediot.”

“So, ye’re for England, are ye ?” said he.

I told him yes.

“Weel, there’s waur places, I believe,” was his reply ; and he relapsed into a silence which was not broken during a quarter of an hour of steady walking.

This interval brought us to the foot of a bare green valley, which wound upwards and backwards among the hills. A little stream came down the midst and made a succession of clear pools ; near by the lowest of which I was aware of a drove of shaggy cattle, and a man who seemed the very counterpart of Mr. Sim making a breakfast upon bread and cheese. This second drover (whose name proved to be Candlish) rose on our approach.

“Here’s a mannie that’s to gang through with us,” said Sim. “It was the auld wife, Gilchrist, wanted it.”

“Aweel, aweel,” said the other ; and presently, remembering his manners, and looking on me with a solemn grin, “A fine day !” says he.

I agreed with him, and asked him how he did.

“Brawly,” was the reply ; and without further civilities, the pair proceeded to get the cattle under way. This, as well as almost all the herding, was the work of a pair of comely and intelligent dogs, directed by Sim or Candlish in little more than monosyllables. Presently we were ascending the side of the mountain by a rude green track, whose presence I had not hitherto observed. A continual sound of

munching and the crying of a great quantity of moor birds accompanied our progress, which the deliberate pace and perennial appetite of the cattle rendered wearisomely slow. In the midst my two conductors marched in a contented silence that I could not but admire. The more I looked at them, the more I was impressed by their absurd resemblance to each other. They were dressed in the same coarse homespun, carried similar sticks, were equally begrimed about the nose with snuff, and each wound in an identical plaid of what is called the shepherd's tartan. In a back view they might be described as indistinguishable; and even from the front they were much alike. An incredible coincidence of



"The more I looked at them, the more I was impressed by their absurd resemblance to each other."

humours augmented the impression. Thrice and four times I attempted to pave the way for some exchange of thought, sentiment, or—at the least of it—human words. An *Ay* or an *Nam* was the sole return, and the topic died on the hillside without echo. I can never deny that I was chagrined; and when, after a little more walking, Sim turned towards me and offered me a ram's horn of snuff, with the question "Do ye use it?" I answered, with some animation, "Faith, sir, I would use pepper to introduce a little cordiality." But even this sally failed to reach, or at least failed to soften, my companions.

At this rate we came to the summit of a ridge, and saw the track descend in front of us abruptly into a desert vale, about a league in length, and closed at the farther end by no less barren hilltops. Upon this point of vantage Sim came to a halt, took off his hat, and mopped his brow.

"Weel," he said, "here we're at the top o' Howden."

"The top o' Howden, sure eneuch," said Candlish.

"Mr. St. Ivey, are ye dry?" said the first.

"Now, really," said I, "is not this Satan reproving sin?"

"What ails ye, man?" said he. "I'm offerin' ye a dram."

"Oh, if it be anything to drink," said I, "I am as dry as my neighbours."

Whereupon Sim produced from the corner of his plaid a black bottle, and we all drank and pledged each other. I found these gentlemen followed upon such

occasions an invariable etiquette, which you may be certain I made haste to imitate. Each wiped his mouth with the back of his left hand, held up the bottle in his right, remarked with emphasis, "Here's to ye!" and swallowed as much of the spirit as his fancy prompted. This little ceremony, which was the nearest thing to manners I could perceive in either of my companions, was repeated at becoming intervals, generally after an ascent. Occasionally we shared a mouthful of ewe-milk cheese and an inglorious form of bread, which I understood (but am far from engaging my honour on the point) to be called "shearer's bannock." And that may be said to have concluded our whole active intercourse for the first day.

I had the more occasion to remark the extraordinarily desolate nature of that country, through which the drove road continued, hour after hour and even day after day, to wind. A continual succession of insignificant shaggy hills, divided by the course of ten thousand brooks, through which we had to wade, or by the side of which we encamped at night: infinite perspectives of heather, infinite quantities of moorfowl; here and there, by a stream side, small and pretty clumps of willows or the silver birch; here and there, the ruins of ancient and inconsiderable fortresses—made the unchanging characters of the scene. Occasionally, but only in the distance, we could perceive the smoke of a small town or of an isolated farmhouse or cottage on the moors; more often, a flock of sheep and its attendant shepherd, or a rude field of agriculture perhaps not yet harvested. With these alleviations, we might almost be said to pass through an unbroken desert—sure, one of the most impoverished in Europe; and when I recalled to mind that we were yet but a few leagues from the chief city (where the law courts sat every day with a press of business, soldiers garrisoned the castle, and men of admitted parts were carrying on the practice of letters and the investigations of science), it gave me a singular view of that poor, barren, and yet illustrious country through which I travelled. Still more, perhaps, did it commend the wisdom of Miss Gilchrist in sending me with these uncouth companions and by this unfrequented path.

My itinerary is by no means clear to me: the names and distances I never clearly knew, and have now wholly forgotten; and this is the more to be regretted as there is no doubt that, in the course of those days, I must have passed and camped among sites which have been rendered illustrious by the pen of Walter Scott. Nay, more, I am of opinion that I was still more favoured by fortune, and have actually met and spoken with that inimitable author. Our encounter was of a tall, stoutish, elderly gentleman, a little grizzled, and of a rugged but cheerful and engaging countenance. He sat on a hill pony, wrapped in a plaid over his green coat, and was accompanied by a horsewoman, his daughter, a young lady of the most charming appearance. They overtook us on a stretch of heath, reined up as they came alongside, and accompanied us for perhaps a quarter of an hour before they galloped off again across the hillsides to our left. Great was my amazement to find the unconquerable Mr. Sim thaw immediately on the accost of this strange gentleman, who hailed him with a ready familiarity, proceeded at once to discuss with him the trade of droving and the prices of cattle, and did not disdain to take a pinch from the inevitable ram's horn. Presently I was aware that the stranger's eye was directed on myself; and there ensued a conversation, some of which I could not help overhearing at the time, and the rest have pieced together more or less plausibly from the report of Sim.

"Surely that must be an *amateur drover* ye have gotten there?" the gentleman seems to have asked.

Sim replied, I was a young gentleman that had a reason of his own to travel privately.



"Mr. St. Ivey, are ye dry?"

"Well, well, ye must tell me nothing of that. I am in the law, you know, and *tace* is the Latin for a candle," answered the gentleman. "But I hope it's nothing bad."

Sam told him it was no more than debt.

"Oh, Lord, if that be all!" cried the gentleman; and, turning to myself, "Well, sir," he added, "I understand you are taking a tramp through our forest here for the pleasure of the thing?"

"Why, yes, sir," said I; "and I must say I am very well entertained."

"I envy you," said he. "I have jogged many miles of it myself when I was younger. My youth lies buried about here under every heather-bush, like the soul

of the licentiate Lucius. But you should have a guide. The pleasure of this country is much in the legends, which grow as plentiful as blackberries." And directing my attention to a little fragment of a broken wall no greater than a tombstone, he told me, for an example, a story of its earlier inhabitants. Years after it chanced that I was one day diverting myself with a Waverley Novel, when what should I come upon but the identical narrative of my green-coated gentleman upon the moors! In a moment the scene, the tones of his voice, his northern accent, and the very aspect of the earth and sky and temperature of the weather, flashed back into my mind with the reality of dreams. The unknown in the green coat had been the Great Unknown! I had met Scott; I had heard a story from his lips; I should have been able to write, to claim acquaintance, to tell him that his legend still tingled in my ears. But the discovery came too late, and the great man had already succumbed under the load of his honours and misfortunes.

Presently, after giving us a cigar apiece, Scott bade us farewell and disappeared with his daughter over the hills. And when I applied to Sim for information, his answer of "The Shirra, man! A'budy kens the Shirra!" told me, unfortunately, nothing.

A more considerable adventure falls to be related. We were now near the border. We had travelled for long upon the track beaten and browsed by a million herds, our predecessors, and had seen no vestige of that traffic which had created it. It was early in the morning when we at last perceived, drawing near to the drove road, but still at the distance of about half a league, a second caravan, similar to but larger than our own. The liveliest excitement was at once exhibited by both my comrades. They climbed hillocks, they studied the approaching drove from under their hand, they consulted each other with an appearance of alarm that seemed to me extraordinary. I had learned by this time that their stand-off manners implied, at least, no active enmity; and I made bold to ask them what was wrong.

"Bad yins," was Sim's emphatic answer.

All day the dogs were kept unsparingly on the alert, and the drove pushed forward at a very unusual and seemingly unwelcome speed. All day Sim and Candlish, with a more than ordinary expenditure both of snuff and of words, continued to debate the position. It seems that they had recognised two of our neighbours on the road—one Faa, and another by the name of Gillies. Whether there was an old feud between them still unsettled I could never learn; but Sim and Candlish were prepared for every degree of fraud or violence at their hands. Candlish repeatedly congratulated himself on having left "the watch at home with the mistress"; and Sim perpetually brandished his cudgel, and cursed his ill-fortune that it should be sprung.

"I wilna care a damn to gie the daashed scoon'rel a fair clout wi' it," he said. "The daashed thing micht come sindry in ma hand."

"Well, gentlemen," said I, "suppose they do come on, I think we can give a very good account of them." And I made my piece of holly, Ronald's gift, the value of which I now appreciated, sing about my head.

"Ay, man? Are ye stench?" inquired Sim, with a gleam of approval in his wooden countenance.

The same evening, somewhat wearied with our day-long expedition, we encamped on a little verdant mound, from the midst of which there welled a spring of clear water scarce great enough to wash the hands in. We had made our meal and lain down, but were not yet asleep, when a growl from one of the colliers set us on the alert. All three sat up, and on a second impulse all lay down again, but now with our cudgels ready. A man must be an alien and an outlaw, an old



"The rogue that fell to my share was exceedingly agile."

soldier and a young man in the bargain, to take adventure easily. With no idea as to the rights of the quarrel or the probable consequences of the encounter, I was as ready to take part with my two drovers, as ever to fall in line on the morning of a battle. Presently there leaped three men out of the heather; we had scarce time to get to our feet before we were assailed; and in a moment each one of us was engaged with an adversary whom the deepening twilight scarce permitted him to see. How the battle sped in other quarters I am in no position to describe. The rogue that fell to my share was exceedingly agile and expert with his weapon; had and held me at a disadvantage from the first assault; forced me to give ground continually, and at last, in mere self-defence, to let him have the point. It struck him in the throat, and he went down like a ninepin and moved no more.

It seemed this was the signal for the engagement to be discontinued. The other combatants separated at once; our foes were suffered, without molestation, to lift up and bear away their fallen comrade; so that I perceived this sort of war to be not wholly without laws of chivalry, and perhaps rather to partake of the character of a tournament than of a battle *à outrance*. There was no doubt, at least, that I was supposed to have pushed the affair too seriously. Our friends the enemy removed their wounded companion with undisguised consternation; and they were no sooner over the top of the brae, than Sim and Candlish roused up their wearied drove and set forth on a night march.

"I'm thinking Faa's unco bad," said the one.

"Ay," said the other, "he lookit dooms gash."

"He did that," said the first.

And their weary silence fell upon them again.

Presently Sim turned to me. "Ye're unco ready with the stick," said he.

"Too ready, I'm afraid," said I. "I am afraid Mr. Faa (if that be his name) has got his gruel."

"Weel, I wouldnae wonder," replied Sim.

"And what is likely to happen?" I inquired.

"Aweel," said Sim, snuffing profoundly, "if I were to offer an opeenion, it would not be conscientious. For the plain fac' is, Mr. St. Ivy, that I div not ken. We have had crackit heids—and rowth of them—ere now; and we have had a broken leg or maybe twa; and the like of that we drover bodies make a kind of a practice like to keep among oursel's. But a corp we have none of us ever had to deal with, and I could set nae leemit to what Gillies might consider proper in the affair. Forbye that, he would be in rather a hobble himsel', if he was to gang hame wantin' Faa. Folk are awfu' throng with their questions, and partecularly when they're no wantin'."

"That's a fac'," said Candlish.

I considered this prospect ruefully; and then, making the best of it, "Upon all which accounts," said I, "the best will be to get across the border and there separate. If you are troubled, you can very truly put the blame upon your late companion; and if I am pursued, I must just try to keep out of the way."

"Mr. St. Ivy," said Sim, with something resembling enthusiasm, "no a word mair! I have met in wi' mony kinds o' gentry ere now; I hae seen o' them that was the tae thing, and I hae seen o' them that was the tither; but the wale of a gentleman like you I have no sae very frequently seen the bate of."

Our night march was accordingly pursued with unremitting diligence. The stars paled, the east whitened, and we were still, both dogs and men, toiling after the wearied cattle. Again and again Sim and Candlish lamented the necessity: it was "fair ruin on the bestial," they declared; but the thought of a judge and a scaffold hunted them ever forward. I myself was not so much to be pitied. All that night, and during the whole of the little that remained before us of our conjunct journey, I enjoyed a new pleasure, the reward of my prowess, in the now loosened tongue of Mr. Sim. Candlish was still obdurately taciturn: it was the man's nature; but Sim, having finally appraised and approved me, displayed without reticence a rather garrulous habit of mind and a pretty talent for narration. The pair were old and close companions, co-existing in these endless moors in a brotherhood of silence such as I have heard attributed to the trappers of the west. It seems absurd to mention love in connection with so ugly and snuffy a couple; at least, their trust was absolute; and they entertained a surprising admiration for each other's qualities; Candlish exclaiming that Sim was "grand company!" and Sim

frequently assuring me in an aside that for "a rale, auld, stench bitch, there was nae the hate of Candlish in braid Scotland." The two dogs appeared to be entirely included in this family compact, and I remarked that their exploits and traits of character were constantly and minutely observed by the two masters. Dog stories particularly abounded with them; and not only the dogs of the present but those of the past contributed their quota. "But that was naething," Sim would begin: "there was a herd in Manar, they ca'd him Tweedie—ye'll mind Tweedie, Can'lish?" "Fine, that!" said Candlish. "Aweel, Tweedie had a dog——" The story I have forgotten; I daresay it was dull, and I suspect it was not true; but indeed, my travels with the drovers had rendered me indulgent, and perhaps even credulous, in the matter of dog stories. Beautiful, indefatigable beings! as I saw them at the end of a long day's journey frisking, barking, bounding, striking attitudes, slanting a bushy tail, manifestly playing to the spectator's eye, manifestly rejoicing in their grace and beauty—and turned to observe Sim and Candlish unornamentally plodding in the rear with the plaids about their bowed shoulders and the drop at their snuffy nose—I thought I would rather claim kinship with the dogs than with the men! My sympathy was unreturned; in their eyes I was a creature light as air; and they would scarce spare me the time for a perfunctory caress or perhaps a hasty lap of the wet tongue, ere they were back again in sedulous attendance on those dingy deities, their masters—and their masters, as like as not, damning their stupidity.

Altogether the last hours of our tramp were infinitely the most agreeable to me, and I believe to all of us; and by the time we came to separate, there had grown up a certain familiarity and mutual esteem that made the parting harder. It took place about four of the afternoon on a bare hillside from which I could see the ribbon of the great north road, henceforth to be my conductor. I asked what was to pay.

"Naething," replied Sim.

"What in the name of folly is this?" I exclaimed. "You have led me, you have fed me, you have filled me full of whisky, and now you will take nothing!"

"Ye see we indentit for that," replied Sim.

"Indented?" I repeated; "what does the man mean?"

"Mr. St. Ivy," said Sim, "this is a maitter entirely between Candlish and me and the auld wife, Gilchrist. You had naething to say to it; weel, ye can have naething to do with it, then."

"My good man," said I, "I can allow myself to be placed in no such ridiculous position. Mrs. Gilchrist is nothing to me, and I refuse to be her debtor."

"I dinna exacly see what way ye're gaun to help it," observed my drover.

"By paying you here and now," said I.

"There's aye twa to a bargain, Mr. St. Ives," said he.

"You mean that you will not take it?" said I.

"There or thereabout," said he. "Forbye, that it would set ye a heap better to keep your siller for them you awe it to. Ye're young, Mr. St. Ivy, and thoughtless; but it's my belief that, wi' care and circumspection, ye may yet do credit to yourself. But just you bear this in mind: that him that *awes* siller should never *gie* siller."

Well, what was there to say? I accepted his rebuke, and bidding the pair farewell, set off alone upon my southward way.

"Mr. St. Ivy," was the last word of Sim, "I was never muckle ta'en up in Englishry; but I think that I really ought to say that ye seem to me to have the makings of quite a dacent lad."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT NORTH ROAD.

It chanced that as I went down the hill these last words of my friend the drover echoed not unfruitfully in my head. I had never told these men the least particulars as to my race or fortune, as it was a part, and the best part, of their civility to ask no questions: yet they had dubbed me without hesitation English. Some strangeness in the accent they had doubtless thus explained. And it occurred to me, that if I could pass in Scotland for an Englishman, I might be able to reverse the process and pass in England for a Scot. I thought, if I was pushed to it, I could make a struggle to imitate the brogue; after my experience with Candlish and Sim, I had a rich provision of outlandish words at my command; and I felt I could tell the tale of Tweedie's dog so as to deceive a native. At the same time, I was afraid my name of St. Ives was scarcely suitable; till I remembered there was a town so called in the province of Cornwall, thought I might yet be glad to claim it for my place of origin, and decided for a Cornish family and a Scots education. For a trade, as I was equally ignorant of all, and as the most innocent might at any moment be the means of my exposure, it was best to pretend to none. And I dubbed myself a young gentleman of a sufficient fortune and an idle, curious habit of mind, rambling the country at my own charges, in quest of health, information, and merry adventures.

At Newcastle, which was the first town I reached, I completed my preparations for the part, before going to the inn, by the purchase of a knapsack and a pair of leathern gaiters. My plaid I continued to wear from sentiment. It was warm, useful to sleep in if I were again benighted, and I had discovered it to be not unbecoming for a man of gallant carriage. Thus equipped, I supported my character of the light-hearted pedestrian not amiss. Surprise was indeed expressed that I should have selected such a season of the year; but I pleaded some delays of business, and smilingly claimed to be an eccentric. The devil was in it, I would say, if any season of the year was not good enough for me; I was not made of sugar, I was no mollicoddle to be afraid of an ill-aired bed or a sprinkle of snow; and I would knock upon the table with my fist and call for t'other bottle, like the noisy and free-hearted young gentleman I was. It was my policy (if I may so express myself) to talk much and say little. At the inn tables, the country, the state of the roads, the business interest of those who sat down with me, and the course of public events, afforded me a considerable field in which I might discourse at large and still communicate no information about myself. There was no one with less air of reticence; I plunged into my company up to the neck; and I had a long cock-and-bull story of an aunt of mine which must have convinced the most suspicious of my innocence. "What!" they would have said, "that young ass to be concealing anything! Why, he has deafened me with an aunt of his until my head aches. He only wants you should give him a line, and he would tell you his whole descent from Adam downward, and his whole private fortune to the last shilling." A responsible solid fellow was even so much moved by pity for my inexperience as to give me a word or two of good advice: that I was but a young man after all—I had at this time a deceptive air of youth that made me easily pass for one-and-twenty, and was, in the circumstances, worth a fortune—that the company at inns was very mingled, that I should do well to be more careful, and the like; to all which I made answer that I meant no harm myself and expected none from others, or the devil was in it. "You are one of

those d—d prudent fellows that I could never abide with," said I. "You are the kind of man that has a long head. That's all the world, my dear sir: the long-heads and the short-horns! Now, I am a short-horn." "I doubt," says he, "that you will not go very far without getting sheared." I offered to bet with him on that, and he made off, shaking his head.

But my particular delight was to enlarge on politics and the war. None damned the French like me; none was more bitter against the Americans. And when the north-bound mail arrived, crowned with holly, and the coachman and guard hoarse with shouting victory, I went even so far as to entertain the company to a bowl of punch, which I compounded myself with no illiberal hand, and doled out to such sentiments as the following:—

"Our glorious victory on the Nivelle!" "Lord Wellington, God bless him! and may victory ever attend upon his arms!" and, "Soult, poor devil! and may he catch it again to the same tune!"

Never was oratory more applauded to the echo—never any one was more of the popular man than I. I promise you, we made a night of it. Some of the company supported each other, with the assistance of boots, to their respective bed-chambers, while the rest slept on the field of glory where we had left them; and at the breakfast table the next morning there was an extraordinary assemblage of red eyes and shaking fists. I observed patriotism to burn much lower by daylight. Let no one blame me for insensibility to the reverses of France! God knows how my heart raged. How I longed to fall on that herd of swine and knock their heads together in the moment of their revelry! But you are to consider my own situation and its necessities; also a certain lightheartedness, eminently Gallic, which forms a leading trait in my character, and leads me to throw myself into new circumstances with the spirit of a schoolboy. It is possible that I sometimes allowed this impish humour to carry me further than good taste approves; and I was certainly punished for it once.

This was in the episcopal city of Durham. We sat down, a considerable company, to dinner, most of us fine old vatted English Tories of that class which is often so enthusiastic as to be inarticulate. I took and held the lead from the beginning; and, the talk having turned on the French in the Peninsula, I gave them authentic details (on the authority of a cousin of mine, an ensign) of certain cannibal orgies in Galicia, in which no less a person than General Caffarelli had taken a part. I always disliked that commander, who once ordered me under arrest for insubordination; and it is possible that a spice of vengeance added to the rigour of my picture. I have forgotten the details; no doubt they were high-coloured. No doubt I rejoiced to fool these jolter-heads; and no doubt the sense of security that I drank from their dull, gasping faces encouraged me to proceed extremely far. And for my sins, there was one silent little man at table who took my story at the true value. It was from no sense of humour, to which he was quite dead. It was from no particular intelligence, for he had not any. The bond of sympathy, of all things in the world, had rendered him clairvoyant.

Dinner was no sooner done than I strolled forth into the streets with some design of viewing the cathedral; and the little man was silently at my heels. A few doors from the inn, in a dark place of the street, I was aware of a touch on my arm, turned suddenly, and found him looking up at me with eyes pathetically bright.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but that story of yours was particularly rich. He—he! Particularly racy," said he. "I tell you, sir, I took you wholly! I *smoked* you! I believe you and I, sir, if we had a chance to talk, would find we had a

good many opinions in common. Here is the 'Blue Bell,' a very comfortable place. They draw good ale, sir. Would you be so condescending as to share a pot with me?"

There was something so ambiguous and secret in the little man's perpetual signalling, that I confess my curiosity was much aroused. Blaming myself, even as I did so, for the indiscretion, I embraced his proposal, and we were soon face to face over a tankard of mulled ale. He lowered his voice to the least attenuation of a whisper.

"Here, sir," said he, "is to the Great Man. I think you take me? No?" He leaned forward till our noses almost touched. "Here is to the Emperor!" said he.

I was extremely embarrassed, and, in spite of the creature's innocent appearance, more than half alarmed. I thought him too ingenuous, and, indeed, too daring for a spy. Yet if he were honest he must be a man of extraordinary indiscretion, and therefore very unfit to be encouraged by an escaped prisoner. I took a half course, accordingly—accepted his toast in silence, and drank it without enthusiasm.

He proceeded to abound in the praises of Napoleon, such as I had never heard in France, or at least only on the lips of officials paid to offer them.

"And this Caffarelli, now," he pursued: "he is a splendid fellow, too, is he not? I have not heard vastly much of him myself. No details, sir—no details! We labour under huge difficulties here as to unbiassed information."

"I believe I have heard the same complaint in other countries," I could not help remarking. "But as to Caffarelli, he is neither lame nor blind, he has two legs, and a nose in the middle of his face. And I care as much about him as you care for the dead body of Mr. Perceval!"

He studied me with glowing eyes.

"You cannot deceive me!" he cried. "You have served under him. You are a Frenchman! I hold by the hand, at last, one of that noble race, the pioneers of the glorious principles of liberty and brotherhood. Hush! No, it is all right. I thought there had been somebody at the door. In this wretched, enslaved country we dare not even call our souls our own. The spy and the hangman, sir—the spy and the hangman! And yet there is a candle burning, too. The good leaven is working, sir—working underneath. Even in this town there are a few brave spirits, who meet every Wednesday. You must stay over a day or so, and join us. We do not use this house. Another, and a quieter. They draw fine ale, however—fair, mild ale. You will find yourself among friends, among brothers. You will hear some very daring sentiments expressed!" he cried, expanding his small chest. "Monarchy, Christianity—all the trappings of a bloated past—the Free Fraternity of Durham and Tyneside deride."

Here was a devil of a prospect for a gentleman whose whole design was to avoid observation! The Free Fraternity had no charms for me; daring sentiments were no part of my baggage; and I tried, instead, a little cold water.

"You seem to forget, sir, that my Emperor has re-established Christianity," I observed.

"Ah, sir, but that was policy!" he exclaimed. "You do not understand Napoleon. I have followed his whole career. I can explain his policy from first to last. Now for instance in the Peninsula, on which you were so very amusing, if you will come to a friend's house who has a map of Spain, I can make the whole course of the war quite clear to you, I venture to say, in half an hour."

This was intolerable. Of the two extremes, I found I preferred the British

tory; and, making an appointment for the morrow, I pleaded sudden headache, escaped to the inn, packed my knapsack, and fled, about nine at night, from this accursed neighbourhood. It was cold, starry, and clear, and the road dry, with a touch of frost. For all that, I had not the smallest intention to make a long stage of it; and about ten o'clock, spying on the right-hand side of the way the lighted windows of an alehouse, I determined to bait there for the night.

It was against my principle, which was to frequent only the dearest inns; and the misadventure that befell me was sufficient to make me more particular in the future. A large company was assembled in the parlour, which was heavy with clouds of tobacco smoke and brightly lighted up by a roaring fire of coal. Hard by the chimney stood a vacant chair in what I thought an enviable situation, whether for warmth or the pleasures of society; and I was about to take it, when the nearest of the company stopped me with his hand.

"Beg thy pardon, sir," said he; "but that there chair belongs to a British soldier."

A chorus of voices enforced and explained. It was one of Lord Wellington's heroes. He had been wounded under Rowland Hill. He was Colburne's right-hand man. In short, this favoured individual appeared to have served with every separate corps and under every individual general in the Peninsula. Of course I apologised. I had not known. The devil was in it if a soldier had not a right to the best in England. And with that sentiment, which was loudly applauded, I found a corner of a bench, and awaited, with some hopes of entertainment, the return of the hero. He proved, of course, to be a private soldier. I say of course, because no officer could possibly enjoy such heights of popularity. He had been wounded before San Sebastian, and still wore his arm in a sling. What was a great deal worse for him, every member of the company had been plying him with drink. His honest yokel's countenance blazed as if with fever, his eyes were glazed and looked the two ways, and his feet stumbled as, amidst a murmur of applause, he returned to the midst of his admirers.

Two minutes afterwards I was again posting in the dark along the highway; to explain which sudden movement of retreat I must trouble the reader with a reminiscence of my services.

I lay one night with the out-pickets in Castile. We were in close touch with the enemy; the usual orders had been issued against smoking, fires, and talk, and both armies lay as quiet as mice, when I saw the English sentinel opposite making a signal by holding up his musket. I repeated it, and we both crept together in the dry bed of a stream, which made the demarcation of the armies. It was wine he wanted, of which we had a good provision, and the English had quite run out. He gave me the money, and I, as was the custom, left him my firelock in pledge, and set off for the canteen. When I returned with a skin of wine, behold, it had pleased some uneasy devil of an English officer to withdraw the outposts! Here was a situation with a vengeance, and I looked for nothing but ridicule in the present and punishment in the future. Doubtless our officers winked pretty hard at this interchange of courtesies, but doubtless it would be impossible to wink at so gross a fault, or rather so pitiable a misadventure as mine; and you are to conceive me wandering in the plains of Castile, benighted, charged with a wine-skin for which I had no use, and with no knowledge whatever of the whereabouts of my musket beyond that it was somewhere in my Lord Wellington's army. But my Englishman was either a very honest fellow, or else extremely thirsty, and at last contrived to advertise me of his new position. Now, the English sentry in Castile and the wounded hero in the Durham public-house were one and the

same person; and if he had been a little less drunk, or myself less lively in getting away, the travels of M. St. Ives might have come to an untimely end.

I suppose this woke me up; it stirred in me besides a spirit of opposition, and in spite of cold, darkness, the highwaymen and the footpads, I determined to walk right on till breakfast-time: a happy resolution, which enabled me to observe one of those traits of manners which at once depict a country and condemn it. It was near midnight when I saw, a great way ahead of me, the light of many torches; presently after, the sound of wheels reached me and the slow tread of feet, and soon I had joined myself to the rear of a sordid, silent, and lugubrious procession, such as we see in dreams. Close on a hundred persons marched by torchlight in unbroken silence; in their midst a cart, and in the cart, on an inclined platform, the dead body of a man—the centre-piece of this solemnity, the hero whose obsequies we were come forth at this unusual hour to celebrate. It was but a plain, dingy old fellow of fifty or sixty, his throat cut, his shirt turned over as though to show the wound. Blue trousers and brown socks completed his attire, if we can talk so of the dead. He had a horrid look of a waxwork. In the tossing of the lights he seemed to make faces and mouths at us, to frown, and to be at times upon the point of speech. The cart, with this shabby and tragic freight, and surrounded by its silent escort and bright torches, continued for some distance to creak along the high road, and I to follow it in amazement, which was soon exchanged for horror. At the corner of a lane the procession stopped, and as the torches ranged themselves along the hedgerow-side, I became aware of a grave dug in the midst of the thoroughfare, and a provision of quicklime piled in the ditch. The cart was backed to the margin, the body slung off the platform and dumped into the grave with an irreverent roughness. A sharpened stake had hitherto served it for a pillow. It was now withdrawn, held in its place by several volunteers, and a fellow with a heavy mallet (the sound of which still haunts me at night) drove it home through the bosom of the corpse. The hole was filled with quicklime, and the bystanders, as if relieved of some oppression, broke at once into a sound of whispered speech.

My shirt stuck to me, my heart had almost ceased beating, and I found my tongue with difficulty.

"I beg your pardon," I gasped to a neighbour, "what is this? what has he done? is it allowed?"

"Why, where do you come from?" replied the man.

"I am a traveller, sir," said I, "and a total stranger in this part of the country. I had lost my way when I saw your torches, and came by chance on this—incredible scene. Who was the man?"

"A suicide," said he. "Ay, he was a bad one, was Johnnie Green."

It appeared this was a wretch who had committed many barbarous murders, and being at last upon the point of discovery fell of his own hand. And the nightmare at the cross-roads was the regular punishment, according to the laws of England, for an act which the Romans honoured as a virtue! Whenever an Englishman begins to prate of civilisation (as, indeed, it's a defect they are rather prone to), I hear the measured blows of a mallet, see the bystanders crowd with torches about the grave, smile a little to myself in conscious superiority—and take a thimbleful of brandy for the stomach's sake.

I believe it must have been at my next stage, for I remember going to bed extremely early, that I came to the model of a good old-fashioned English inn, and was attended on by the picture of a pretty chambermaid. We had a good many pleasant passages as she waited table or warmed my bed for me with a

devil of a brass warming-pan, fully larger than herself; and as she was no less pert than she was pretty, she may be said to have given rather better than she took. I cannot tell why (unless it were for the sake of her saucy eyes), but I made her my confidante, told her I was attached to a young lady in Scotland, and received the encouragement of her sympathy, mingled and connected with a fair amount of rustic wit. While I slept the down-mail stopped for supper: it chanced that one of the passengers left behind a copy of the *Edinburgh Courant*, and the



"The picture of a pretty chambermaid."

next morning my pretty chambermaid set the paper before me at breakfast, with the remark that there was some news from my lady-love. I took it eagerly, hoping to find some farther word of our escape, in which I was disappointed; and I was about to lay it down, when my eye fell on a paragraph immediately concerning me. Faa was in hospital, grievously sick, and warrants were out for the arrest of Sim and Candlish. These two men had shown themselves very loyal to me. This trouble emerging, the least I could do was to be guided by a similar loyalty to them. Suppose my visit to my uncle crowned with some success, and my finances

re-established, I determined I should immediately return to Edinburgh, put their case in the hands of a good lawyer, and await events. So my mind was very lightly made up to what proved a mighty serious matter. Candlish and Sim were all very well in their way, and I do sincerely trust I should have been at some pains to help them, had there been nothing else. But in truth my eyes and my heart were set on quite another matter, and I received the news of their tribulation almost with joy. That is never a bad wind that blows where we want to go, and you may be sure there was nothing unwelcome in a circumstance that carried me back to Edinburgh and Flora. From that hour I began to indulge myself with the making of imaginary scenes and interviews, in which I confounded the aunt, flattered Ronald, and now in the witty, now in the sentimental manner, declared my love and received the assurance of its return. By means of this exercise my resolution daily grew stronger, until at last I had piled together such a mass of obstinacy as it would have taken a cataclysm of nature to subvert.

"Yes," said I to the chambermaid, "here is news of my lady-love indeed, and very good news too."

All that day, in the teeth of a keen winter wind, I hugged myself in my plaid, and it was as though her arms were flung around me.

CHAPTER XII.

I FOLLOW A COVERED CART NEARLY TO MY DESTINATION.

At last I began to draw near, by reasonable stages, to the neighbourhood of Wakefield; and the name of Mr. Burchell Fenn came to the top in my memory. This was the gentleman (the reader may remember) who made a trade of forwarding the escape of French prisoners. How he did so: whether he had a signboard, *Escapes forwarded, apply within*; what he charged for his services, or whether they were gratuitous and charitable, were all matters of which I was at once ignorant and extremely curious. Thanks to my proficiency in English, and Mr. Romaine's bank-notes, I was getting on swimmingly without him; but the trouble was that I could not be easy till I had come at the bottom of these mysteries, and it was my difficulty that I knew nothing of him beyond the name. I knew not his trade—beyond that of Forwarder of Escapes—whether he lived in town or country, whether he were rich or poor, nor by what kind of address I was to gain his confidence. It would have a very bad appearance to go along the highwayside asking after a man of whom I could give so scanty an account; and I should look like a fool, indeed, if I were to present myself at his door and find the police in occupation! The interest of the conundrum, however, tempted me, and I turned aside from my direct road to pass by Wakefield; kept my ears pricked as I went for any mention of his name, and relied for the rest on my good fortune. If Luck (who must certainly be feminine) favoured me as far as to throw me in the man's way, I should owe the lady a candle; if not, I could very readily console myself. In this experimental humour, and with so little to help me, it was a miracle that I should have brought my enterprise to a good end; and there are several saints in the calendar who might be happy to exchange with St. Ives!

I had slept the night in a good inn at Wakefield, made my breakfast by candle-light with the passengers of an up-coach, and set off in a very ill temper with myself and my surroundings. It was still early; the air raw and cold; the

sun low, and soon to disappear under a vast canopy of rain-clouds that had begun to assemble in the north-west, and from that quarter invaded the whole width of the heaven. Already the rain fell in crystal rods; already the whole face of the country sounded with the discharge of drains and ditches; and I looked forward to a day of downpour and the hell of wet clothes, in which particular I am as dainty as a cat. At a corner of the road, and by the last glint of the drowning sun, I spied a covered cart, of a kind that I thought I had never seen before, preceding me at the foot's pace of jaded horses. Anything is interesting to a pedestrian that can help him to forget the miseries of a day of rain; and I bettered my pace and gradually overtook the vehicle.

The nearer I came, the more it puzzled me. It was much such a cart as I am told the calico printers use, mounted on two wheels, and furnished with a seat in front for the driver. The interior closed with a door, and was of a bigness to contain a good load of calico, or (at a pinch and if it were necessary) four or five persons. But, indeed, if human beings were meant to travel there, they had my pity! They must travel in the dark, for there was no sign of a window; and they would be shaken all the way like a phial of doctor's stuff, for the cart was not only ungainly to look at—it was besides very imperfectly balanced on the one pair of wheels, and pitched unconscionably. Altogether, if I had any glancing idea that the cart was really a carriage, I had soon dismissed it; but I was still inquisitive as to what it should contain, and where it had come from. Wheels and horses were splashed with many different colours of mud, as though they had come far and across a considerable diversity of country. The driver continually and vainly plied his whip. It seemed to follow they had made a long, perhaps an all-night, stage; and that the driver, at that early hour of a little after eight in the morning, already felt himself belated. I looked for the name of the proprietor on the shaft, and started outright. Fortune had favoured the careless: it was Burchell Fenn!

"A wet morning, my man," said I.

The driver, a loutish fellow, shock-headed and turnip-faced, returned not a word to my salutation, but savagely flogged his horses. The tired animals, who could scarce put the one foot before the other, paid no attention to his cruelty; and I continued without effort to maintain my position alongside, smiling to myself at the futility of his attempts, and at the same time pricked with curiosity as to why he made them. I made no such formidable a figure as that a man should flee when I accosted him; and my conscience not being entirely clear, I was more accustomed to be uneasy myself than to see others timid. Presently he desisted, and put back his whip in the holster with the air of a man vanquished.

"So you would run away from me?" said I. "Come, come, that's not English."

"Beg pardon, master: no offence meant," he said, touching his hat.

"And none taken!" cried I. "All I desire is a little gaiety by the way."

I understood him to say he didn't "take with gaiety."

"Then I will try you with something else," said I. "Oh, I can be all things to all men, like the apostle! I dare to say I have travelled with heavier fellows than you in my time, and done famously well with them. Are you going home?"

"Yes, I'm a goin' home, I am," he said.

"A very fortunate circumstance for me!" said I. "At this rate we shall see a good deal of each other, going the same way; and, now I come to think of it, why should you not give me a cast? There is room beside you on the bench."

With a sudden snatch, he carried the cart two yards into the roadway. The horses plunged and came to a stop. "No, you don't!" he said, menacing me with the whip. "None o' that with me."

"None of what?" said I. "I asked you for a lift, but I have no idea of taking one by force."

"Well, I've got to take care of the cart and horses, I have," says he. "I don't take up with no runagate vagabones, you see, else."

"I ought to thank you for your touching confidence," said I, approaching carelessly nearer as I spoke. "But I admit the road is solitary hereabouts, and no doubt an accident soon happens. Little fear of anything of the kind with you! I like you for it, like your prudence, like that pastoral shyness of disposition. But why not put it out of my power to hurt? Why not open the door and bestow me here in the box, or whatever you please to call it?" And I laid my hand demonstratively on the body of the cart.

He had been timorous before; but at this, he seemed to lose the power of speech a moment, and stared at me in a perfect enthusiasm of fear.

"Why not?" I continued. "The idea is good. I should be safe in there if I were the monster Williams himself. The great thing is to have me under lock and key. For it does lock; it is locked now," said I, trying the door. "*A propos*, what have you for a cargo? It must be precious."

He found not a word to answer.

Rat-tat-tat, I went upon the door like a well-drilled footman. "Any one at home?" I said, and stooped to listen.

There came out of the interior a stifled sneeze, the first of an uncontrollable paroxysm: another followed immediately on the heels of it; and then the driver turned with an oath, laid the lash upon the horses with so much energy that they found their heels again, and the whole equipage fled down the road at a gallop.

At the first sound of the sneeze, I had started back like a man shot. The next moment, a great light broke on my mind, and I understood. Here was the secret of Fenn's trade: this was how he forwarded the escape of prisoners, hawking them by night about the country in his covered cart. There had been Frenchmen close to me: he who had just sneezed was my countryman, my comrade, perhaps already my friend! I took to my heels in pursuit. "Hold hard!" I shouted. "Stop! It's all right! Stop!" But the driver only turned a white face on me for a moment, and redoubled his efforts, bending forward, plying his whip and crying to his horses: these lay themselves down to the gallop and beat the highway with flying hoofs; and the cart bounded after them among the ruts and fled in a halo of rain and spattering mud. But a minute since, and it had been trundling along like a lame cow: and now it was off as though drawn by Apollo's coursers. There is no telling what a man can do, until you frighten him!

It was as much as I could do myself, though I ran valiantly, to maintain my distance; and that (since I knew my countrymen so near) was become a chief point with me. A hundred yards farther on the cart whipped out of the high road into a lane embowered with leafless trees, and became lost to view. When I saw it next, the driver had increased his advantage considerably, but all danger was at an end, and the horses had again declined into a hobbling walk. Persuaded that they could not escape me, I took my time, and recovered my breath as I followed them.

Presently the lane twisted at right angles, and showed me a gate and the beginning of a gravel sweep: and a little after, as I continued to advance, a red brick house about seventy years old, in a fine style of architecture, and presenting a front of many windows to a lawn and garden. Behind, I could see outhouses and the peaked roofs of stacks; and I judged that a manor-house had in some way declined to be the residence of a tenant-farmer, careless alike of appearances

and substantial comfort. The marks of neglect were visible on every side, in flower-bushes straggling beyond the borders, in the ill-kept turf, and in the broken windows that were incongruously patched with paper or stuffed with rags. A thicket of trees, mostly evergreen, fenced the place round and secluded it from the eyes of prying neighbours. As I came in view of it, on that melancholy winter's morning, in the deluge of the falling rain, and with the wind that now rose in occasional gusts and hooted over the old chimneys, the cart had already drawn up at the front door steps, and the driver was already in earnest discourse with Mr. Burchell Fenn. He was standing with his hands behind his back—a man of a gross, misbegotten face and body, dewlapped like a bull and red as a harvest moon; and in his jockey cap, blue coat and top boots, he had much the air of a good, solid tenant-farmer.

The pair continued to speak as I came up the approach, but received me at last in a sort of goggling silence. I had my hat in my hand.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Burchell Fenn?" said I.

"The same, sir," replied Mr. Fenn, taking off his jockey cap in answer to my civility, but with the distant look and the tardy movements of one who continues to think of something else. "And who may you be?" he asked.

"I shall tell you afterwards," said I. "Suffice it, in the meantime, that I come on business."

He seemed to digest my answer laboriously, his mouth gaping, his little eyes never straying from my face.

"Suffer me to point out to you, sir," I resumed, "that this is a devil of a wet morning; and that the chimney corner, and possibly a glass of something hot, are clearly indicated."

Indeed, the rain was now grown to be a deluge; the gutters of the house roared; the air was filled with the continuous, strident crash. The stolidity of his face, on which the rain streamed, was far from reassuring me. On the contrary, I was aware of a distinct qualm of apprehension, which was not at all lessened by a view of the driver, craning from his perch to observe us with the expression of a fascinated bird. So we stood silent, when the prisoner again began to sneeze from the body of the cart; and at the sound, prompt as a transformation, the driver had whipped up his horses and was shambling off round the corner of the house, and Mr. Fenn, recovering his wits with a gulp, had turned to the door behind him.

"Come in, come in, sir," he said. "I beg your pardon, sir; the lock goes a trifle hard."

Indeed, it took him a surprising time to open the door, which was not only locked on the outside, but the lock seemed rebellious from disuse; and when at last he stood back and motioned me to enter before him, I was greeted on the threshold by that peculiar and convincing sound of the rain echoing over empty chambers. The entrance hall, in which I now found myself, was of a good size and good proportions; potted plants occupied the corners; the paved floor was soiled with muddy footprints and encumbered with straw; on a mahogany hall table, which was the only furniture, a candle had been stuck and suffered to burn down—plainly a long while ago, for the gutterings were green with mould. My mind, under these new impressions, worked with unusual vivacity. I was here shut off with Fenn and his hireling in a deserted house, a neglected garden, and a wood of evergreens: the most eligible theatre for a deed of darkness. There came to me a vision of two flags raised in the hall floor, and the driver putting in the rainy afternoon over my grave, and the prospect displeased me extremely.

I felt I had carried my pleasantry as far as was safe; I must lose no time in declaring my true character, and I was even choosing the words in which I was to begin, when the hall door was slammed to behind me with a bang, and I turned, dropping my stick as I did so, in time—and not any more than time—to save my life.

The surprise of the onslaught and the huge weight of my assailant gave him the advantage. He had a pistol in his right hand of a portentous size, which it took me all my strength to keep deflected. With his left arm he strained me to his bosom, so that I thought I must be crushed or stifled. His mouth was open, his face crimson, and he panted aloud with hard animal sounds. The affair was as brief as it was hot and sudden. The potations which had swelled and bloated his carcase had already weakened the springs of energy. One more huge effort, that came near to overpower me, and in which the pistol happily exploded, and I felt his grasp slacken and weakness come on his joints; his legs succumbed under his weight, and he grovelled on his knees on the stone floor. "Spare me!" he gasped.

I had not only been abominably frightened; I was shocked besides: my delicacy was in arms, like a lady to whom violence should have been offered by a similar monster. I plucked myself from his horrid contact, I snatched the pistol—even discharged; it was a formidable weapon—and menaced him with the butt. "Spare you!" I cried: "you beast!"

His voice died in his fat inwards, but his lips still vehemently framed the same words of supplication. My anger began to pass off, but not all my repugnance; the picture he made revolted me, and I was impatient to be spared the further view of it.

"Here," said I, "stop this performance: it sickens me. I am not going to kill you, do you hear? I have need of you."

A look of relief, that I could almost have called beautiful, dawned on his countenance. "Anything—anything you wish," said he.

Anything is a big word, and his use of it brought me for a moment to a stand. "Why, what do you mean?" I asked. "Do you mean that you will blow the gaff on the whole business?"

He answered me Yes with eager asseverations.

"I know Monsieur de Saint-Yves is in it; it was through his papers we traced you," I said. "Do you consent to make a clean breast of the others?"

"I do—I will!" he cried. "The 'ole crew of 'em; there's good names among 'em. I'll be king's evidence."

"So that all shall hang except yourself? You damned villain!" I broke out. "Understand at once that I am no spy or thief-taker. I am a kinsman of Monsieur de St. Yves—here in his interest. Upon my word, you have put your foot in it prettily, Mr. Burchell Fenn! Come, stand up; don't grovel there. Stand up, you lump of iniquity!"

He scrambled to his feet. He was utterly unmanned, or it might have gone hard with me yet; and I considered him hesitating, as, indeed, there was cause. The man was a double-dyed traitor: he had tried to murder me, and I had first baffled his endeavours and then exposed and insulted him. Was it wise to place myself any longer at his mercy? With his help I should doubtless travel more quickly; doubtless also far less agreeably; and there was everything to show that it would be at a greater risk. In short, I should have washed my hands of him on the spot, but for the temptation of the French officers, whom I knew to be so near, and for whose society I felt so great and natural an impatience. If I was

to see anything of my countrymen, it was clear I had first of all to make my peace with Mr. Fenn; and that was no easy matter. To make friends with any one implies concessions on both sides; and what could I concede? What could I say of him, but that he had proved himself a villain and a fool, and the worse man?

"Well," said I, "here has been rather a poor piece of business, which I daresay you can have no pleasure in calling to mind; and, to say truth, I would as readily forget it myself. Suppose we try. Take back your pistol, which smells very ill; put it in your pocket or wherever you had it concealed. There! Now let us meet for the first time.—Give you good morning, Mr. Fenn! I hope you do very well. I come on the recommendation of my kinsman, the Vicomte de St. Yves."

"Do you mean it?" he cried. "Do you mean you will pass over our little scrimmage?"

"Why, certainly!" said I. "It shows you are a bold fellow, who may be trusted to forget the business when it comes to the point. There is nothing against you in the little scrimmage, unless that your courage is greater than your strength. You are not so young as you once were, that is all."

"And I beg of you, sir, don't betray me to the Vis-count," he pleaded. "I'll not deny but what my 'eart failed me a trifle; but it was only a word, sir, what anybody might have said in the 'eat of the moment, and over with it."

"Certainly," said I. "That is quite my own opinion."

"The way I came to be anxious about the Vis-count," he continued, "is that I believe he might be induced to form an 'asty judgment. And the business, in a pecuniary point of view, is all that I could ask; only trying, sir—very trying. It's making an old man of me before my time. You might have observed yourself, sir, that I 'aven't got the knees I once 'ad. The knees and the breathing, there's where it takes me. But I'm very sure, sir, I address a gentleman as would be the last to make trouble between friends."

"I am sure you do me no more than justice," said I; "and I shall think it quite unnecessary to dwell on any of these passing circumstances in my report to the Vicomte."

"Which you do favour him (if you'll excuse me being so bold as to mention it) exac'ly!" said he. "I should have known you anywheres. May I offer you a pot of 'ome-brewed ale, sir? By your leave! This way, if you please. I am 'eartily grateful—'eartily pleased to be of any service to a gentleman like you, sir, which is related to the Vis-count, and really a fambly of which you might well be proud! Take care of the step, sir. You have good news of 'is 'ealth, I trust? as well as that of Monseer the Count?"

God forgive me! the horrible fellow was still puffing and panting with the fury of his assault, and already he had fallen into an obsequious, wheedling familiarity like that of an old servant,—already he was flattering me on my family connections!

I followed him through the house into the stable-yard, where I observed the driver washing the cart in a shed. He must have heard the explosion of the pistol. He could not choose but hear it: the thing was shaped like a little blunderbuss, charged to the mouth, and made a report like a piece of field artillery. He had heard, he had paid no attention; and now, as we came forth by the back door, he raised for a moment a pale and tell-tale face that was as direct as a confession. The rascal had expected to see Fenn come forth alone; he was waiting to be called on for that part of sexton, which I had already allotted to him in fancy.

I need not detain the reader very long with any description of my visit to the

back-kitchen : of how we mulled our ale there, and mulled it very well : nor of how we sat talking, Fenn like an old, faithful, affectionate dependant, and I—well ! I myself fallen into a mere admiration of so much impudence, that transcended words, and had very soon conquered animosity. I took a fancy to the man, he was so vast a humbug. I began to see a kind of beauty in him, his *aplomb* was so majestic. I never knew a rogue to cut so fat : his villainy was ample, like his belly, and I could scarce find it in my heart to hold him responsible for either. He was good enough to drop into the autobiographical : telling me how the farm, in spite of the war and the high prices, had proved a disappointment ; how there was “a sight of cold, wet land as you come along the igh road” ; how the winds and rains and the seasons had been misdirected, it seemed “o’ purpose” ; how Mrs. Fenn had died—“I lost her coming two year ago ; a remarkable fine woman, my old girl, sir ! if you’ll excuse me,” he added, with a burst of humility. In short, he gave me an opportunity of studying John Bull, as I may say, stuffed naked—his greed, his usuriousness, his hypocrisy, his perfidy of the back-stairs, all swelled to the superlative—such as was well worth the little disarray and fluster of our passage in the hall.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(To be continued.)





THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XIII.

I MEET TWO OF MY COUNTRYMEN.

AS soon as I judged it safe, and that was not before Burchell Fenn had talked himself back into his breath and a complete good humour, I proposed he should introduce me to the French officers, henceforth to become my fellow-passengers. There were two of them, it appeared, and my heart beat as I approached the door. The specimen of Perfidious Albion whom I had just been studying gave me the stronger zest for my fellow-countrymen. I could have embraced them; I could have wept on their necks. And all the time I was going to a disappointment.

It was in a spacious and low room, with an outlook on the court, that I found them bestowed. In the good days of that house the apartment had probably served as a library, for there were traces of shelves along the wainscot. Four or five mattresses lay on the floor in a corner, with a frowsy heap of bedding; near by was a basin and a cube of soap; a rude kitchen table and some deal chairs stood together at the far end; and the room was illuminated by no less than four windows, and warmed by a little crazy, sidelong grate, propped up with bricks in the vent of a hospitable chimney, in which a pile of coals smoked prodigiously and gave out a few starveling flames. An old, frail, white-haired officer sat in one of the chairs, which he had drawn close to this apology for a fire. He was wrapped in a camlet cloak, of which the collar was turned up, his knees touched the bars, his hands were spread in the very smoke, and yet he shivered for cold. The second—a big, florid, fine animal of a man, whose every gesture labelled him the cock of the walk and the admiration of the ladies—had apparently despaired of the fire, and now strode up and down, sneezing hard, bitterly blowing his nose, and proffering a continual stream of bluster, complaint, and barrack-room oaths.

Fenn showed me in, with the brief form of introduction: "Gentlemen all, this

here's another fare!" and was gone again at once. The old man gave me but the one glance out of lack-lustre eyes; and even as he looked a shiver took him as sharp as a hiccough. But the other, who represented to admiration the picture of a Beau in a Catarrh, stared at me arrogantly.

"And who are you, sir?" he asked.



"An old, frail, white-haired officer."

I made the military salute to my superiors.

"Champdivers, private, Eighth of the Line," said I.

"Pretty business!" said he. "And you are going on with us? Three in a cart, and a great trolloping private at that! And who is to pay for you, my fine fellow?" he inquired.

"If monsieur comes to that," I answered civilly, "who paid for him?"

"Oh, if you choose to play the wit!" said he,—and began to rail at large upon his destiny, the weather, the cold, the danger and the expense of the escape, and above all, the cooking of the accursed English. It seemed to annoy him particularly that I should have joined their party. "If you knew what you were doing, thirty thousand millions of pigs! you would keep yourself to yourself! The horses can't drag the cart; the roads are all ruts and swamps. No longer ago than last night the Colonel and I had to march half the way—thunder of God!—half the way to the knees in mud—and I with this infernal cold—and the danger of detection! Happily we met no one: a desert—a real desert—like the whole abominable country! Nothing to eat—no, sir, there is nothing to eat but raw cow and greens boiled in water—nor to drink but Worcestershire sauce! Now I, with my catarrh, I have no appetite; is it not so? Well, if I were in France, I should have a good soup with a crust in it, an omelette, a fowl in rice, a partridge in cabbages—things to tempt me, thunder of God! But here—day of God!—what a country! And cold, too! They talk about Russia—this is all the cold I want! And the people—look at them! What a race! Never any handsome men; never any fine officers!"—and he looked down complacently for a moment at his waist—"And the women—what faggots! No, that is one point clear, I cannot stomach the English!"

There was something in this man so antipathetic to me, as sent the mustard into my nose. I can never bear your bucks and dandies, even when they are decent-looking and well dressed; and the Major—for that was his rank—was the image of a flunkey in good luck. Even to be in agreement with him, or to seem to be so, was more than I could make out to endure.

"You could scarce be expected to stomach them," said I, civilly, "after having just digested your parole."

He whipped round on his heel and turned on me a countenance which I daresay he imagined to be awful; but another fit of sneezing cut him off ere he could come the length of speech.

"I have not tried the dish myself," I took the opportunity to add. "It is said to be unpalatable. Did monsieur find it so?"

With surprising vivacity the Colonel woke from his lethargy. He was between us ere another word could pass.

"Shame, gentlemen!" he said. "Is this a time for Frenchmen and fellow-soldiers to fall out? We are in the midst of our enemies; a quarrel, a loud word, may suffice to plunge us back into irretrievable distress. *Monsieur le Commandant*, you have been gravely offended. I make it my request, I make it my prayer—if need be, I give you my orders—that the matter shall stand by until we come safe to France. Then, if you please, I will serve you in any capacity. And for you, young man, you have shown all the cruelty and carelessness of youth. This gentleman is your superior; he is no longer young"—at which word you are to conceive the Major's face. "It is admitted he has broken his parole. I know not his reason, and no more do you. It might be patriotism in this hour of our country's adversity, it might be humanity, necessity; you know not what in the least, and you permit yourself to reflect on his honour. To break parole may be a subject for pity and not derision. I have broken mine—I, a colonel of the Empire. And why? I have been years negotiating my exchange, and it cannot be managed; those who have influence at the Ministry of War continually rush in before me, and I have to wait, and my daughter at home is in a decline. I am going to see my daughter at last, and it is my only concern lest I should have delayed too long. She is ill, and very ill,—at death's door. Nothing is left me

but my daughter, my Emperor, and my honour; and I give my honour, blame me for it who dare!"

At this my heart smote me.

"For God's sake," I cried, "think no more of what I have said! A parole? what is a parole against life and death and love? I ask your pardon; this gentleman's also. As long as I shall be with you, you shall not have cause to complain of me again. I pray God you will find your daughter alive and restored."

"That is past praying for," said the Colonel; and immediately the brief fire died out of him, and returning to the hearth, he relapsed into his former abstraction.

But I was not so easy to compose. The knowledge of the poor gentleman's trouble and the sight of his face had filled me with the bitterness of remorse; and I insisted upon shaking hands with the Major (which he did with a very ill grace), and abounded in palinodes and apologies.

"After all," said I, "who am I to talk? I am in the luck to be a private soldier; I have no parole to give or to keep; once I am over the rampart, I am as free as air. I beg you to believe that I regret from my soul the use of these ungenerous expressions. Allow me . . . Is there no way in this damned house to attract attention? Where is this fellow, Fenn?"

I ran to one of the windows and threw it open. Fenn, who was at the moment passing below in the court, cast up his arms like one in despair, called to me to keep back, plunged into the house, and appeared next moment in the doorway of the chamber.

"Oh, sir!" says he, "keep away from those there windows. A body might see you from the back lane."

"It is registered," said I. "Henceforward I will be a mouse for precaution and a ghost for invisibility. But in the meantime, for God's sake, fetch us a bottle of brandy! Your room is as damp as the bottom of a well, and these gentlemen are perishing of cold."

So soon as I had paid him (for everything, I found, must be paid in advance), I turned my attention to the fire, and whether because I threw greater energy into the business, or because the coals were now warmed and the time ripe, I soon started a blaze that made the chimney roar again. The shine of it, in that dark, rainy day, seemed to reanimate the Colonel like a blink of sun. With the outburst of the flames, besides, a draught was established, which immediately delivered us from the plague of smoke; and by the time Fenn returned, carrying a bottle under his arm and a single tumbler in his hand, there was already an air of gaiety in the room that did the heart good.

I poured out some of the brandy.

"Colonel," said I, "I am a young man and a private soldier. I have not been long in this room, and already I have shown the petulance that belongs to the one character and the ill manners that you may look for in the other. Have the humanity to pass these slips over, and honour me so far as to accept this glass."

"My lad," says he, waking up and blinking at me with an air of suspicion, "are you sure you can afford it?"

I assured him I could.

"I thank you, then: I am very cold." He took the glass out, and a little colour came in his face. "I thank you again," said he. "It goes to the heart."

The Major, when I motioned him to help himself, did so with a good deal of

liberality ; continued to do so for the rest of the morning, now with some sort of apology, now with none at all ; and the bottle began to look foolish before dinner was served. It was such a meal as he had himself predicted : beef, greens, potatoes, mustard in a teacup, and beer in a brown jug that was all over hounds, horses, and hunters, with a fox at the far end and a gigantic John Bull—for all the world like Fenn—sitting in the midst in a bob-wig and smoking tobacco. The beer was a good brew, but not good enough for the Major ; he laced it with brandy—for his cold, he said ; and in this curative design the remainder of the bottle ebbed away. He called my attention repeatedly to the circumstance ; helped me pointedly to the dregs, threw the bottle in the air and played tricks with it ; and at last, having exhausted his ingenuity, and seeing me remain quite blind to every hint, he ordered and paid for another himself.

As for the Colonel, he ate nothing, sat sunk in a muse, and only awoke occasionally to a sense of where he was, and what he was supposed to be doing. On each of these occasions he showed a gratitude and kind courtesy that endeared him to me beyond expression. “Champdivers, my lad, your health !” he would say. “The Major and I had a very arduous march last night, and I positively thought I should have eaten nothing, but your fortunate idea of the brandy has made quite a new man of me—quite a new man.” And he would fall to with a great air of heartiness, cut himself a mouthful, and before he had swallowed it, would have forgotten his dinner, his company, the place where he then was, and the escape he was engaged on, and become absorbed in the vision of a sick room and a dying girl in France. The pathos of this continual preoccupation, in a man so old, sick, and over-weary, and whom I looked upon as a mere bundle of dying bones and death-pains, put me wholly from my victuals : it seemed there was an element of sin, a kind of rude bravado, of youth in the mere relishing of food at the same table with this tragic father ; and though I was well enough used to the coarse, plain diet of the English, I ate scarce more than himself. Dinner was hardly over before he succumbed to a lethargic sleep ; lying on one of the mattresses with his limbs relaxed, and his breath seemingly suspended—the very image of dissolution.

This left the Major and myself alone at the table. You must not suppose our *tête-à-tête* was long, but it was a lively period while it lasted. He drank like a fish or an Englishman ; shouted, beat the table, roared out songs, quarrelled, made it up again, and at last tried to throw the dinner-plates through the window, a feat of which he was at that time quite incapable. For a party of fugitives, condemned to the most rigorous discretion, there was never seen so noisy a carnival ; and through it all the Colonel continued to sleep like a child. Seeing the Major so well advanced, and no retreat possible, I made a fair wind of a foul one, keeping his glass full, pushing him with toasts ; and sooner than I could have dared to hope, he became drowsy and incoherent. With the wrong-headedness of all such sots, he would not be persuaded to lie down upon one of the mattresses until I had stretched myself upon another. But the comedy was soon over ; soon he slept the sleep of the just, and snored like a military music ; and I might get up again and face (as best I could) the excessive tedium of the afternoon.

I had passed the night before in a good bed ; I was denied the resource of slumber ; and there was nothing open for me but to pace the apartment, maintain the fire, and brood on my position. I compared yesterday and to-day—the safety, comfort, jollity, open-air exercise and pleasant roadside inns of the one, with the tedium, anxiety, and discomfort of the other. I remembered that I was in the hands of Fenn, who could not be more false—though he might be more vindictive

—than I fancied him. I looked forward to nights of pitching in the covered cart, and days of monotony in I knew not what hiding-places; and my heart failed me, and I was in two minds whether to slink off ere it was too late, and return to my former solitary way of travel. But the Colonel stood in the path. I had not seen much of him; but already I judged him a man of a childlike nature—with that sort of innocence and courtesy that, I think, is only to be found in old soldiers or old priests—and broken with years and sorrow. I could not turn my back on his distress; could not leave him alone with the selfish trooper who snored on the next mattress. "Chamdivers, my lad, your health!" said a voice in my ear, and stopped me—and there are few things I am more glad of in the retrospect than that it did.

It must have been about four in the afternoon—at least the rain had taken off, and the sun was setting with some wintry pomp—when the current of my reflections was effectually changed by the arrival of two visitors in a gig. They were farmers of the neighbourhood, I suppose—big, burly fellows in great-coats and top-boots, mightily flushed with liquor when they arrived, and before they left, inimitably drunk. They stayed long in the kitchen with Burchell, drinking, shouting, singing, and keeping it up; and the sound of their merry minstrelsy kept me a kind of company. There was not much variety—we had "Widdicombe Fair" at least three times; and if it was scarce tuneful, it was at least more so than the bestial snoring of the Major on the mattress. The night fell, and the shine of the fire brightened and blinked on the panelled wall. Our illuminated windows must have been visible not only from the back lane of which Fenn had spoken, but from the court where the farmers' gig awaited them. When they should come forth, they must infallibly perceive the chamber to be tenanted; and suppose them to remark upon the circumstance, it became a question whether Fenn was honest enough to wish to protect us, or would have sense enough left, after his long potations, to put their inquiries by. These were not pleasing insinuations; and when our friends below gave us the third time

"Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, lend me thy grey mare—

All along, down along, out along lee—

I want for to go to Widdicombe Fair,"

I felt I would have gladly borrowed the grey mare myself to escape from the bubbling pot of troubles in which I had plunged myself by my visit to Burchell Fenn. In the far end of the firelit room lay my companions, the one silent, the other clamorously noisy, the images of death and drunkenness. Little wonder if I were tempted to join in the choruses below, and sometimes could hardly refrain from laughter, and sometimes, I believe, from tears—so unmitigated was the tedium, so cruel the suspense, of this period.

At last, about six at night, I should fancy, the noisy minstrels appeared in the court, headed by Fenn with a lantern, and knocking together as they came. The visitors clambered noisily into the gig, one of them shook the reins, and they were snatched out of sight and hearing with a suddenness that partook of the nature of prodigy. I am well aware there is a Providence for drunken men, that holds the reins for them and presides over their troubles; doubtless he had his work cut out for him with this particular gigful! Fenn rescued his toes with an ejaculation from under the departing wheels, and turned at once with uncertain steps and devious lantern to the far end of the court. There, through the open doors of a coach-house, the shock-headed lad was already to be seen drawing forth the covered cart. If I wished any private talk with our host, it must be now or never.

Accordingly I groped my way downstairs, and came to him as he looked on at and lighted the harnessing of the horses.

"The hour approaches when we have to part," said I; "and I shall be obliged if you will tell your servant to drop me at the nearest point for Dunstable. I am determined to go so far with our friends, Colonel X and Major Y, but my business is peremptory, and it takes me to the neighbourhood of Dunstable."

Orders were given, to my satisfaction, with an obsequiousness that seemed only inflamed by his potations.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAVELS OF THE COVERED CART.

My companions were aroused with difficulty: the Colonel, poor old gentleman, to a sort of permanent dream, in which you could say of him only that he was very deaf and anxiously polite; the Major still maudlin drunk. We had a dish of tea by the fireside, and then issued like criminals into the scathing cold of the night. For the weather had in the meantime changed. Upon the cessation of the rain, a strict frost had succeeded. The moon, being young, was already near the zenith when we started, glittered everywhere on sheets of ice, and sparkled in ten thousand icicles. A more unpromising night for a journey it was hard to conceive. But in the course of the afternoon the horses had been well roughed; and King (for such was the name of the shock-headed lad) was very positive that he could drive us without misadventure. He was as good as his word; indeed, despite a gawky air, he was simply invaluable in his present employment, showing marked sagacity in all that concerned the care of horses, and guiding us by one short cut after another for days, and without a fault.

The interior of that engine of torture, the covered cart, was fitted with a bench, on which we took our places; the door was shut; in a moment, the night closed upon us solid and stifling; and we felt that we were being driven carefully out of the courtyard. Careful was the word all night, and it was an alleviation of our miseries that we did not often enjoy. In general, as we were driven the better part of the night and day, often at a pretty quick pace and always through a labyrinth of the most infamous country lanes and by-roads, we were so bruised upon the bench, so dashed against the top and sides of the cart, that we reached the end of a stage in truly pitiable case, sometimes flung ourselves down without the formality of eating, made but one sleep of it until the hour of departure returned, and were only properly awakened by the first jolt of the renewed journey. There were interruptions, at times, that we hailed as alleviations. At times the cart was bogged, once it was upset, and we must alight and lend the driver the assistance of our arms; at times, too (as on the occasion when I had first encountered it), the horses gave out, and we had to trail alongside in mud or frost until the first peep of daylight, or the approach to a hamlet or a high road, bade us disappear like ghosts into our prison.

The main roads of England are incomparable for excellence, of a beautiful smoothness, very ingeniously laid down, and so well kept that in most weathers you could take your dinner off any part of them without distaste. On them, to the note of the bugle, the mail did its sixty miles a day; innumerable chaises whisked after the bobbing postboys; or some young blood would flit by in a curriole and tandem, to the vast delight and danger of the lieges. On them, the slow-pacing waggons made a music of bells, and all day long the travellers on horseback and

the travellers on foot (like happy Mr. St. Ives so little a while before!) kept coming and going, and baiting and gaping at each other, as though a fair were due, and they were gathering to it from all England. No, nowhere in the world is travel so great a pleasure as in that country. But unhappily our one need was to be secret; and all this rapid and animated picture of the road swept quite apart from us, as we lumbered up hill and down dale, under hedge and over stone, among circuitous byways. Only twice did I receive, as it were, a whiff of the highway. The first reached my ears alone. I might have been anywhere. I only knew I was walking in the dark night and among ruts, when I heard very far off, over the silent country that surrounded us, the guard's horn wailing its signal to the next post-house for a change of horses. It was like the voice of the day heard in darkness, a voice of the world heard in prison, the note of a cock crowing in the mid-seas—in short, I cannot tell you what it was like, you will have to fancy for yourself—but I could have wept to hear it. Once we were belated: the cattle could hardly crawl, the day was at hand, it was a nipping, rigorous morning, King was lashing his horses, I was giving an arm to the old Colonel, and the Major was coughing in our rear. I must suppose that King was a thought careless, being nearly in desperation about his team, and, in spite of the cold morning, breathing hot with his exertions. We came, at last, a little before sunrise to the summit of a hill, and saw the high-road passing at right angles through an open country of meadows and hedgerow pollards; and not only the York mail, speeding smoothly at the gallop of the four horses, but a post-chaise besides, with the post-boy titupping briskly, and the traveller himself putting his head out of the window, but whether to breathe the dawn, or the better to observe the passage of the mail, I do not know. So that we enjoyed for an instant a picture of free life on the road, in its most luxurious forms of despatch and comfort. And thereafter, with a poignant feeling of contrast in our hearts, we must mount again into our wheeled dungeon.

We came to our stages at all sorts of odd hours, and they were in all kinds of odd places. I may say at once that my first experience was my best. Nowhere again were we so well entertained as at Burchell Fenn's. And this, I suppose, was natural, and indeed inevitable, in so long and secret a journey. The first stop, we lay six hours in a barn standing by itself in a poor, marshy orchard, and packed with hay; to make it more attractive, we were told it had been the scene of an abominable murder, and was now haunted. But the day was beginning to break, and our fatigue was too extreme for visionary terrors. The second or third, we alighted on a barren heath about midnight, built a fire to warm us under the shelter of some thorns, supped like beggars on bread and a piece of cold bacon, and slept like gipsies with our feet to the fire. In the meanwhile, King was gone with the cart, I know not where, to get a change of horses, and it was late in the dark morning when he returned and we were able to resume our journey. In the middle of another night, we came to a stop by an ancient, whitewashed cottage of two stories; a privet hedge surrounded it; the frosty moon shone blankly on the upper windows; but through those of the kitchen the firelight was seen glinting on the roof and reflected from the dishes on the wall. Here, after much hammering on the door, King managed to arouse an old crone from the chimney-corner chair, where she had been dozing in the watch; and we were had in, and entertained with a dish of hot tea. This old lady was an aunt of Burchell Fenn's—and an unwilling partner in his dangerous trade. Though the house stood solitary, and the hour was an unlikely one for any passenger upon the road, King and she conversed in whispers only. There was something dismal,

something of the sick-room, in this perpetual, guarded sibilation. The apprehensions of our hostess insensibly communicated themselves to every one present. We ate like mice in a cat's ear; if one of us jingled a teaspoon, all would start; and when the hour came to take the road again, we drew a long breath of relief, and climbed to our places in the covered cart with a positive sense of escape. The most of our meals, however, were taken boldly at hedgerow alehouses, usually at untimely hours of the day, when the clients were in the field or the farmyard at labour. I shall have to tell presently of our last experience of the sort, and how unfortunately it miscarried; but as that was the signal for my separation from my fellow-travellers, I must first finish with them.

I had never any occasion to waver in my first judgment of the Colonel. The old gentleman seemed to me, and still seems in the retrospect, the salt of the earth. I had occasion to see him in the extremes of hardship, hunger and cold; he was dying, and he looked it; and yet I cannot remember any hasty, harsh, or impatient word to have fallen from his lips. On the contrary, he ever showed himself careful to please; and even if he rambled in his talk, rambled always gently—like a humane, half-witted old hero, true to his colours to the last. I would not dare to say how often he awoke suddenly from a lethargy, and told us again, as though we had never heard it, the story of how he had earned the cross, how it had been given him by the hand of the Emperor, and of the innocent—and, indeed, foolish—sayings of his daughter when he returned with it on his bosom. He had another anecdote which he was very apt to give, by way of a rebuke, when the Major wearied us beyond endurance with dispraises of the English. This was an account of the *braves gens* with whom he had been boarding. True enough, he was a man so simple and grateful by nature, that the most common civilities were able to touch him to the heart, and would remain written in his memory; but from a thousand inconsiderable but conclusive indications, I gathered that this family had really loved him, and loaded him with kindness. They made a fire in his bedroom, which the sons and daughters tended with their own hands; letters from France were looked for with scarce more eagerness by himself than by these alien sympathisers; when they came, he would read them aloud in the parlour to the assembled family, translating as he went. The Colonel's English was elementary; his daughter not in the least likely to be an amusing correspondent; and, as I conceived these scenes in the parlour, I felt sure the interest centred in the Colonel himself, and I thought I could feel in my own heart that mixture of the ridiculous and the pathetic, the contest of tears and laughter, which must have shaken the bosoms of the family. Their kindness had continued till the end. It appears they were privy to his flight, the camlet cloak had been lined expressly for him, and he was the bearer of a letter from the daughter of the house to his own daughter in Paris. The last evening, when the time came to say good-night, it was tacitly known to all that they were to look upon his face no more. He rose, pleading fatigue, and turned to the daughter, who had been his chief ally: "You will permit me, my dear—to an old and very unhappy soldier—and may God bless you for your goodness!" The girl threw her arms about his neck and sobbed upon his bosom; the lady of the house burst into tears; "*et je vous le jure, le père se mouchoit!*" quoth the Colonel, twisting his moustaches with a cavalry air, and at the same time blinking the water from his eyes at the mere recollection.

It was a good thought to me that he had found these friends in captivity: that he had started on this fatal journey from so cordial a farewell. He had broken his parole for his daughter: that he should ever live to reach her sick bed, that he could continue to endure to an end the hardships, the crushing fatigue, the savage

cold, of our pilgrimage, I had early ceased to hope. I did for him what I was able,—nursed him, kept him covered, watched over his slumbers, sometimes held him in my arms at the rough places of the road. “Champdivers,” he once said, “you are like a son to me—like a son.” It is good to remember, though at the time it put me on the rack. All was to no purpose. Fast as we were travelling towards France, he was travelling faster still to another destination. Daily he grew weaker and more indifferent. An old rustic accent of Lower Normandy reappeared in his speech, from which it had long been banished, and grew stronger; old words of the *patois*, too: *ouistreham*, *matrassé*, and others, the sense of which we were sometimes unable to guess. On the very last day he began again his eternal story of the cross and the Emperor. The Major, who was particularly ill, or at least particularly cross, uttered some angry words of protest. “*Pardonnez-moi, monsieur le commandant, mais c’est pour monsieur*,” said the Colonel: “Monsieur has not yet heard the circumstance, and is good enough to feel an interest.” Presently, after, however, he began to lose the thread of his narrative; and at last: “*Qué que j’ai? Je m’embrouille!*” says he, “*Suffit: s’m’a la donné, et Berthe en était bien contente.*” It struck me as the falling of the curtain or the closing of the sepulchre doors.

Sure enough, in but a little while after, he fell into a sleep as gentle as an infant’s, which insensibly changed into the sleep of death. I had my arm about his body at the time and remarked nothing, unless it were that he once stretched himself a little, so kindly the end came to that disastrous life. It was only at our evening halt that the Major and I discovered we were travelling alone with the poor clay. That night we stole a spade from a field—I think near Market Bosworth—and a little farther on, in a wood of young oak trees and by the light of King’s lantern, we buried the old soldier of the Empire with both prayers and tears.

We had needs invent Heaven if it had not been revealed to us; there are some things that fall so bitterly ill on this side Time! As for the Major, I have long since forgiven him. He broke the news to the poor Colonel’s daughter; I am told he did it kindly; and sure, nobody could have done it without tears! His share of purgatory will be brief; and in this world, as I could not very well praise him, I have suppressed his name. The Colonel’s also, for the sake of his parole. *Requiescant.*

CHAPTER XV.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ATTORNEY’S CLERK.

I HAVE mentioned our usual course, which was to eat in inconsiderable wayside hostelrys, known to King. It was a dangerous business: we went daily under fire to satisfy our appetite, and put our head in the lion’s mouth for a piece of bread. Sometimes, to minimise the risk, we would all dismount before we came in view of the house, straggle in severally, and give what orders we pleased, like disconnected strangers. In like manner we departed, to find the cart at an appointed place, some half a mile beyond. The Colonel and the Major had each a word or two of English,—God help their pronunciation! But they did well enough to order a rasher and a pot or call a reckoning; and, to say truth, these country folks did not give themselves the pains, and had scarce the knowledge, to be critical.

About nine or ten at night the pains of hunger and cold drove us to an alehouse in the flats of Bedfordshire, not far from Bedford itself. In the inn kitchen was a long, lean, characteristic-looking fellow of perhaps forty, dressed in



"By the light of King's lantern we buried the old soldier of the Empire."

black. He sat on a settle by the fireside, smoking a long pipe, such as they call a yard of clay. His hat and wig were hanged upon the knob behind him, his head as bald as a bladder of lard, and his expression very shrewd, cantankerous, and inquisitive. He seemed to value himself above his company, to give himself the airs of a man of the world among that rustic herd; which was often no more than his due; being, as I afterwards discovered, an attorney's clerk. I took upon myself the more ungrateful part of arriving last; and by the time I entered on the scene the Major was already served at a side table. Some general conversation must have passed, and I smelled danger in the air. The Major looked flustered, the attorney's clerk triumphant, and the three or four peasants in smock-frocks (who sat about the fire to play chorus) had let their pipes go out.

"Give you good evening, sir!" said the attorney's clerk to me.

"The same to you, sir," said I.

"I think this one will do," quoth the clerk to the yokels with a wink; and then, as soon as I had given my order, "Pray, sir, whither are you bound?" he added.

"Sir," said I, "I am not one of those who speak either of their business or their destination in houses of public entertainment."

"A good answer," said he, "and an excellent principle. Sir, do you speak French?"

"Why, no, sir," said I. "A little Spanish at your service."

"But you know the French accent, perhaps?" said the clerk.

"Well do I do that!" said I. "The French accent? Why, I believe I can tell a Frenchman in ten words."

"Here is a puzzle for you, then!" he said. "I have no material doubt myself, but some of these gentlemen are more backward. The lack of education, you know. I make bold to say that a man cannot walk, cannot hear, and cannot see, without the blessings of education."

He turned to the Major, whose food plainly stuck in his throat.

"Now, sir," pursued the clerk, "let me have the pleasure to hear your voice again. Where are you going, did you say?"

"Sare, I am go—ing to Lon—don," said the Major.

I could have flung my plate at him to be such an ass, and to have so little a gift of languages where that was the essential.

"What think ye of that?" said the clerk. "Is that French enough?"

"Good God!" cried I, leaping up like one who should suddenly perceive an acquaintance, "is this you, Mr. Dubois? Why, who would have dreamed of encountering you so far from home?" As I spoke, I shook hands with the Major heartily; and turning to our tormentor, "Oh, sir, you may be perfectly reassured! This is a very honest fellow, a late neighbour of mine in the city of Carlisle."

I thought the attorney looked put out; I little knew the man!

"But he is French," said he, "for all that?"

"Ay, to be sure!" said I. "A Frenchman of the emigration! None of your Bounaparté lot. I will warrant his views of politics to be as sound as your own."

"What is a little strange," said the clerk quietly, "is that Mr. Dubois should deny it."

I got it fair in the face, and took it smiling; but the shock was rude, and in the course of the next words I contrived to do what I have rarely done and make a slip in my English. I kept my liberty and life by my proficiency all these months, and for once that I failed, it is not to be supposed that I would make a public exhibition of the details. Enough, that it was a very little error, and one that might have passed ninety-nine times in a hundred. But my limb of the law was as swift to pick it up as though he had been by trade a master of languages.

"Aha!" cries he; "and you are French, too! Your tongue betrays you. Two Frenchmen coming into an alehouse, severally and accidentally, not knowing each other, at ten of the clock at night, in the middle of Bedfordshire? No, sir, that shall not pass! You are all prisoners escaping, if you are nothing worse. Consider yourselves under arrest. I have to trouble you for your papers."

"Where is your warrant, if you come to that?" said I. "My papers! A likely thing that I would show my papers on the *ipse dixit* of an unknown fellow in a hedge alehouse!"

"Would you resist the law?" says he.

"Not the law, sir," said I. "I hope I am too good a subject for that. But for a nameless fellow with a bald head and a pair of gingham small-clothes, why, certainly! 'Tis my birthright as an Englishman. Where's *Magna Charta*, else?"

"We will see about that," says he; and then, addressing the assistants, "where does the constable live?"

"Lord love you, sir!" cried the landlord, "what are you thinking of? The constable at past ten at night! Why, he's abed and asleep, and good and drunk two hours ago!"

"Ah, that a' be!" came in chorus from the yokels.

The attorney's clerk was put to a stand. He could not think of force; there was little sign of martial ardour about the landlord, and the peasants were indifferent—they only listened, and gaped, and now scratched a head and now would get a light to their pipes from the embers on the hearth. On the other hand, the Major and I put a bold front on the business and defied him, not without some ground of law. In this state of matters he proposed I should go along with him to one Squire Merton, a great man of the neighbourhood, who was in the commission of the peace, and the end of his avenue but three lanes away. I told him I would not stir a foot for him if it were to save his soul. Next he proposed I should stay all night where I was, and the constable could see to my affair in the morning, when he was sober. I replied I should go when and where I pleased; that we were lawful travellers in the fear of God and the king, and I for one would suffer myself to be stayed by nobody. At the same time, I was thinking the matter had lasted altogether too long, and I determined to bring it to an end at once.

"See here," said I, getting up, for till now I had remained carelessly seated, "there's only one way to decide a thing like this—only one way that's right *English*—and that's man to man. Take off your coat, sir, and these gentlemen shall see fair play."

At this there came a look in his eye that I could not mistake. His education had been neglected in one essential and eminently British particular: he could not box. No more could I, you may say; but then I had the more impudence—and I had made the proposal.

"He says I'm no Englishman, but the proof of the pudding is the eating of it," I continued. And here I stripped my coat and fell into the proper attitude, which was just about all I knew of this barbarian art. "Why, sir, you seem to me to hang back a little," said I. "Come, I'll meet you; I'll give you an appetiser—though hang me if I can understand the man that wants any enticement to hold up his hands." I drew a bank-note out of my fob and tossed it to the landlord. "There are the stakes," said I. "I'll fight you for first blood, since you seem to make so much work about it. If you tap my claret first, there are five guineas for you, and I'll go with you to any squire you choose to mention. If I tap yours, you'll perhaps let on that I'm the better man, and allow me to go



G.G. MANION!

"I stripped my coat and fell into the proper attitude."

about my lawful business at my own time and convenience, by God! Is that fair, my lads?" says I, appealing to the company.

"Ay, ay," said the chorus of chawbacons; "he can't say no fairer nor that, he can't. Take thy coat off, master!"

The limb of the law was now on the wrong side of public opinion, and, what heartened me to go on, the position was rapidly changing in our favour. Already the Major was paying his shot to the very indifferent landlord, and I could see the white face of King at the back door, making signals of haste.

"Oho!" quoth my enemy, "you are as full

of doubles as a fox, are you not? But I see through you; I see through and through you. You would change the venue, would you?"

"I may be transparent, sir," says I, "but if you'll do me the favour to stand up, you'll find I can hit dam hard."

"Which is a point, if you will observe, that I have never called in question," said he. "Why, you ignorant clowns," he proceeded, addressing the company, "can't you see the fellow is gulling you before your eyes? Can't you see that he's changed the point upon me? I say he's a French prisoner, and he answers that he can box! What has that to do with it? I would not wonder but what he can dance, too—they're all dancing masters over there. I say, and I stick to it, that he's a Frenchy. He says he isn't. Well, then, let him out with his papers, if he has them! If he had, would he not show them? If he had, would he not jump at the idea of going to Squire Merton, a man you all know? Now, you're all plain, straightforward Bedfordshire men, and I wouldn't ask a better lot to appeal to. You're not the kind to be talked over with any French gammon, and he's plenty of that. But let me tell him, he can take his pigs to another market; they'll never do here; they'll never go down in Bedfordshire. Why, look at the man! Look at his feet! Has anybody got a foot in the room like that? See how he stands! do any of you fellows stand like that? Does the landlord, there? Why, he has Frenchman wrote all over him, as big as a sign-post!"

This was all very well; and in a different scene, I might even have been gratified by his remarks; but I saw clearly, if I were to allow him to talk, he might turn the tables on me altogether. He might not be much of a hand at boxing; but I was much mistaken, or he had studied forensic eloquence in a good school. In this predicament, I could think of nothing more ingenious than to

burst out of the house, under the pretext of an ungovernable rage. It was certainly not very ingenious—it was elementary; but I had no choice.

"You white-livered dog!" I broke out. "Do you dare to tell me you're an Englishman, and won't fight? But I'll stand no more of this! I leave this place, where I've been insulted! Here! what's to pay? Pay yourself!" I went on, offering the landlord a handful of silver, "and give me back my bank-note!"

The landlord, following his usual policy of obliging everybody, offered no opposition to my design. The position of my adversary was now thoroughly bad. He had lost my two companions. He was on the point of losing me also. There was plainly no hope of arousing the company to help; and, watching him with a corner of my eye, I saw him hesitate for a moment. The next, he had taken down his hat and his wig, which was of black horsehair; and I saw him draw from behind the settle a vast hooded great-coat and a small valise. "The devil!" thought I: "is the rascal going to follow me?"

I was scarce clear of the inn before the limb of the law was at my heels. I saw his face plain in the moonlight; and the most resolute purpose showed in it, along with an unmoved composure. A chill went over me. "This is no common adventure," thinks I to myself. "You have got hold of a man of character, St. Ives! A bite-hard, a bull-dog, a weasel is on your trail; and how are you to throw him off?" Who was he? By some of his expressions I judged he was a hanger-on of courts. But in what character had he followed the assizes? As a simple spectator, as a lawyer's clerk, as a criminal himself, or—last and worst supposition—as a Bow-street "runner"?

The cart would wait for me, perhaps, half a mile down our onward road, which I was already following. And I told myself that in a few minutes' walking, Bow-street "runner" or not, I should have him at my mercy. And then reflection came to me in time. Of all things, one was out of the question. Upon no account must this obtrusive fellow see the cart. Until I had killed or shook him off, I was quite divorced from my companions—alone, in the midst of England, on a frosty by-way leading whither I knew not, with a sleuth-hound at my heels, and never a friend but the holly-stick!

We came at the same time to a crossing of lanes. The branch to the left was overhung with trees, deeply sunken and dark. Not a ray of moonlight penetrated its recesses; and I took it at a venture. The wretch followed my example in silence; and for some time we crunched together over frozen pools without a word. Then he found his voice, with a chuckle.

"This is not the way to Mr. Merton's," said he.

"No?" said I. "It is mine, however."

"And therefore mine," said he.

Again we fell silent; and we may thus have covered half a mile before the lane, taking a sudden turn, brought us forth again into the moonshine. With his hooded great-coat on his back, his valise in his hand, his black wig adjusted, and footing it on the ice with a sort of sober doggedness of manner, my enemy was changed almost beyond recognition: changed in everything but a certain dry, polemical, pedantic air, that spoke of a sedentary occupation and high stools. I observed, too, that his valise was heavy; and, putting this and that together, hit upon a plan.

"A seasonable night, sir," said I. "What do you say to a bit of running? The frost has me by the toes."

"With all the pleasure in life," says he.

His voice seemed well assured, which pleased me little. However, there was

nothing else to try, except violence, for which it would always be too soon. I took to my heels, accordingly, he after me; and for some time the slapping of our feet on the hard road might have been heard a mile away. He had started a pace behind me, and he finished in the same position. For all his extra years and the weight of his valise, he had not lost a hair's breadth. The devil might race him for me—I had enough of it!

And, besides, to run so fast was contrary to my interests. We could not run long without arriving somewhere. At any moment we might turn a corner and find ourselves at the lodge-gate of some Squire Merton, in the midst of a village whose constable was sober, or in the hands of a patrol. There was no help for it—I must finish with him on the spot, as long as it was possible. I looked about me, and the place seemed suitable: never a light, never a house—nothing but stubble-fields, fallows, and a few stunted trees. I stopped and eyed him in the moonlight with an angry stare.

“Enough of this foolery!” said I.

He had turned, and now faced me full, very pale, but with no sign of shrinking.

“I am quite of your opinion,” said he. “You have tried me at the running; you can try me next at the high jump. It will be all the same. It must end the one way.”

I made my holly whistle about my head.

“I believe you know what way!” said I. “We are alone, it is night, and I am wholly resolved. Are you not frightened?”

“No,” he said, “not in the smallest. I do not box, sir; but I am not a coward, as you may have supposed. Perhaps it will simplify our relations if I tell you at the outset that I walk armed.”

Quick as lightning I made a feint at his head; as quickly he gave ground, and at the same time I saw a pistol glitter in his hand.

“No more of that, Mr. French-Prisoner!” he said. “It will do me no good to have your death at my door.”

“Faith, nor me either!” said I; and I lowered my stick and considered the man, not without a twinkle of admiration. “You see,” I said, “there is one consideration that you appear to overlook: there are a great many chances that your pistol may miss fire.”

“I have a pair,” he returned. “Never travel without a brace of barkers.”

“I make you my compliment,” said I. “You are able to take care of yourself, and that is a good trait. But, my good man! let us look at this matter dispassionately. You are not a coward, and no more am I; we are both men of excellent sense; I have good reason, whatever it may be, to keep my concerns to myself and to walk alone. Now, I put it to you pointedly, am I likely to stand it? Am I likely to put up with your continued and—excuse me—highly impudent *ingérence* into my private affairs?”

“Another French word,” says he composedly.

“Oh! damn your French words!” cried I. “You seem to be a Frenchman yourself!”

“I have had many opportunities, by which I have profited,” he explained. “Few men are better acquainted with the similarities and differences, whether of idiom or accent, of the two languages.”

“You are a pompous fellow, too!” said I.

“Oh, I can make distinctions, sir,” says he. “I can talk with Bedfordshire peasants; and I can express myself becomingly, I hope, in the company of a gentleman of education like yourself.”



W. A. H. G. N.

"At the same time I saw a pistol glitter in his hand."

"If you set up to be a gentleman——" I began.

"Pardon me," he interrupted: "I make no such claim. I only see the nobility and gentry in the way of business. I am quite a plain person."

"For the Lord's sake," I exclaimed, "set my mind at rest upon one point. In the name of mystery, who and what are you?"

"I have no cause to be ashamed of my name, sir," said he, "nor yet my trade. I am Thomas Dudgeon, at your service, clerk to Mr. Daniel Romaine, solicitor of London; High Holborn is our address, sir."

It was only by the ecstasy of the relief that I knew how horribly I had been frightened. I flung my stick on the road.

"Romaine?" I cried. "Daniel Romaine? An old hunk with a red face and a big head, and got up like a Quaker? My dear friend, to my arms!"

"Keep back, I say!" said Dudgeon weakly.

I would not listen to him. With the end of my own alarm, I felt as if I must infallibly be at the end of all dangers likewise; as if the pistol that he held in one hand were no more to be feared than the valise that he carried with the other, and now put up like a barrier against my advance.

"Keep back, or I declare I will fire," he was crying. "Have a care, for God's sake! My pistol——"

He might scream as he pleased. Willy nilly, I folded him to my breast, I pressed him there, I kissed his ugly mug as it had never been kissed before and would never be kissed again; and in the doing so knocked his wig awry and his hat off. He bleated in my embrace; so bleats the sheep in the arms of the butcher. The whole thing, on looking back, appears incomparably reckless and absurd; I no better than a madman for offering to advance on Dudgeon, and he no better than a fool for not shooting me while I was about it. But all's well that ends well; or, as the people in these days kept singing and whistling on the streets:—

"There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft
And looks out for the life of poor Jack."

"There!" said I, releasing him a little, but still keeping my hands on his shoulders, "*je vous ai bel et bien embrassé*—and, as you would say, there is another French word." With his wig over one eye, he looked incredibly rueful and put out. "Cheer up, Dudgeon; the ordeal is over, you shall be embraced no more. But do, first of all, for God's sake, put away your pistol; you handle it as if it were a cockatrice; some time or other, depend upon it, it will certainly go off. Here is your hat. No, let me put it on square, and the wig before it. Never suffer any stress of circumstances to come between you and the duty you owe to yourself. If you have nobody else to dress for, dress for God!

Put your wig straight
On your bald pate,
Keep your chin scraped,
And your figure draped.

Can you match me that? The whole duty of man in a quatrain! And remark, I do not set up to be a professional bard; these are the outpourings of a *dilettante*."

"But, my dear sir!" he exclaimed.

"But, my dear sir!" I echoed, "I will allow no man to interrupt the flow of my ideas. Give me your opinion on my quatrain, or I vow we shall have a quarrel of it."

"Certainly you are quite an original," he said.

"Quite," said I; "and I believe I have my counterpart before me."

"Well, for a choice," says he, smiling, "and whether for sense or poetry, give me

"Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
The rest is all but leather and prunello."

"Oh, but that's not fair—that's Pope! It's not original, Dudgeon. Understand me," said I, wringing his breast-button, "the first duty of all poetry is to be mine, sir—mine. Inspiration now swells in my bosom, because—to tell you the plain truth, and descend a little in style—I am devilish relieved at the turn things have taken. So, I daresay, are you yourself, Dudgeon, if you would only allow it. And *à propos*, let me ask you a home question. Between friends, have you ever fired that pistol?"

"Why, yes, sir," he replied. "Twice—at hedgesparrows."

"And you would have fired at me, you bloody-minded man?" I cried.

"If you go to that, you seemed mighty reckless with your stick," said Dudgeon.

"Did I indeed? Well, well, 'tis all past history; ancient as King Pharamond—which is another French word, if you cared to accumulate more evidence," says I. "But happily we are now the best of friends, and have all our interests in common."

"You go a little too fast, if you'll excuse me, Mr. —: I do not know your name, that I am aware," said Dudgeon.

"No, to be sure!" said I. "Never heard of it!"

"A word of explanation——" he began.

"No, Dudgeon!" I interrupted. "Be practical; I know what you want, and the name of it is supper. *Rien ne creuse comme l'émotion*. I am hungry myself, and yet I am more accustomed to warlike palpitations than you, who are but a hunter of hedgesparrows. Let me look at your face critically: your bill of fare is three slices of cold rare roast beef, a Welsh rabbit, a pot of stout, and a glass or two of sound tawny port, old in bottle—the right milk of Englishmen." Methought there seemed a brightening in his eye and a melting about his mouth at this enumeration.

"The night is young," I continued; "not much past eleven, for a wager. Where can we find a good inn? And remark that I say *good*, for the port must be up to the occasion—not a headache in a pipe of it."

"Really, sir," he said, smiling a little, "you have a way of carrying things——"

"Will nothing make you stick to the subject?" I cried; "you have the most irrelevant mind! How do you expect to rise in your profession? The inn?"

"Well, I will say you are a facetious gentleman!" said he. "You must have your way, I see. We are not three miles from Bedford by this very road."

"Done!" cried I. "Bedford be it!"

I tucked his arm under mine, possessed myself of the valise, and walked him off unresisting. Presently we came to an open piece of country lying a thought down hill. The road was smooth and free of ice, the moonshine thin and bright over the meadows and the leafless trees. I was now honestly done with the purgatory of the covered cart; I was close to my great-uncle's; I had no more fear of Mr. Dudgeon; which were all grounds enough for jollity. And I was aware, besides, of us two as of a pair of tiny and solitary dolls under the vast frosty cupola of the midnight; the rooms decked, the moon burnished, the least of the stars lighted, the floor swept and waxed, and nothing wanting but for the band to

strike up and the dancing to begin. In the exhilaration of my heart I took the music on myself—

“Merrily danced the Quaker’s wife,
And merrily danced the Quaker.”

I broke into that animated and appropriate air, clapped my arm about Dudgeon’s waist, and away down the hill at a dancing step! He hung back a little at the start, but the impulse of the tune, the night, and my example, were not to be resisted. A man made of putty must have danced, and even Dudgeon showed himself to be a human being. Higher and higher were the capers that we cut; the moon repeated in shadow our antic footsteps and gestures; and it came over my mind of a sudden—really like balm—what appearance of man I was dancing with, what a long bilious countenance he had shown under his shaven pate, and what a world of trouble the rascal had given me in the immediate past.

Presently we began to see the lights of Bedford. My Puritanic companion stopped and disengaged himself.

“This is a trifle *infra dig.*, sir, is it not?” said he. “A party might suppose we had been drinking.”

“And so you shall be, Dudgeon,” said I. “You shall not only be drinking, you old hypocrite, but you shall be drunk—dead drunk, sir—and the boots shall put you to bed! We’ll warn him when we go in. Never neglect a precaution; never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day!”

But he had no more frivolity to complain of. We finished our stage and came to the inn-door with decorum, to find the house still alight and in a bustle with many late arrivals; to give our orders with a prompt severity which ensured obedience, and to be served soon after at a side table, close to the fire and in a blaze of candle-light, with such a meal as I had been dreaming of for days past. For days, you are to remember, I had been skulking in the covered cart, a prey to cold, hunger, and an accumulation of discomforts that might have daunted the most brave; and the white table napery, the bright crystal, the reverberation of the fire, the red curtains, the Turkey carpet, the portraits on the coffee-room wall, the placid faces of the two or three late guests who were silently prolonging the pleasures of digestion, and (last, but not by any means least) a glass of an excellent light dry port, put me in a humour only to be described as heavenly. The thought of the Colonel, of how he would have enjoyed this snug room and roaring fire, and of his cold grave in the wood by Market Bosworth, lingered on my palate, *a mari aliqua*, like an after-taste, but was not able—I say it with shame—entirely to dispel my self-complacency. After all, in this world every dog hangs by its own tail. I was a free adventurer, who had just brought to a successful end—or, at least, within view of it—an adventure very difficult and alarming; and I looked across at Mr. Dudgeon, as the port rose to his cheeks, and a smile, that was semi-confidential and a trifle foolish, began to play upon his leathery features, not only with composure, but with a suspicion of kindness. The rascal had been brave, a quality for which I would value the devil; and if he had been pertinacious in the beginning, he had more than made up for it before the end.

“And now, Dudgeon, to explain,” I began. “I know your master, he knows me, and he knows and approves of my errand. So much I may tell you, that I am on my way to Amersham Place.”

“Oho!” quoth Dudgeon, “I begin to see.”

“I am heartily glad of it,” said I, passing the bottle, “because that is about all I can tell you. You must take my word for the remainder. Either believe

me, or don't. If you don't, let's take a chaise; you can carry me to-morrow to High Holborn, and confront me with Mr. Romaine; the result of which will be to set your mind at rest—and to make the holiest disorder in your master's plans. If I judge you aright (for I find you a shrewd fellow), this will not be at all to your mind. You know what a subordinate gets by officiousness: if I can trust my memory, old Romaine has not at all the face that I should care to see in anger; and I venture to predict surprising results upon your weekly salary—if you are paid by the week, that is. In short, let me go free, and 'tis an end of the matter; take me to London, and 'tis only a beginning—and, by my opinion, a beginning of troubles. You can take your choice."

"And that is soon taken," said he. "Go to Amersham to-morrow, or go to the devil if you prefer—I wash my hands of you and the whole transaction. No, you don't find me putting my head in between Romaine and a client! A good man of business, sir, but hard as millstone grit. I might get the sack, and I shouldn't wonder! But, it's a pity, too," he added, and sighed, shook his head, and took his glass off sadly.

"That reminds me," said I. "I have a great curiosity, and you can satisfy it. Why were you so forward to meddle with poor Mr. Dubois? Why did you transfer your attentions to me? And generally, what induced you to make yourself such a nuisance?"

He blushed deeply.

"Why, sir," says he, "there *is* such a thing as patriotism, I hope."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(To be continued.)





THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOME-COMING OF MR. ROWLEY'S VISCOUNT.

BY eight the next morning Dudgeon and I had made our parting. By that time we had grown to be extremely familiar; and I would very willingly have kept him by me, and even carried him to Amersham Place. But it appeared he was due at the public-house where we had met, on some affairs of my great-uncle the Count, who had an outlying estate in that part of the shire. If Dudgeon had had his way the night before, I should have been arrested on my uncle's land and by my uncle's agent, a culmination of ill-luck.

A little after noon I started, in a hired chaise, by way of Dunstable. The mere mention of the name Amersham Place made every one supple and smiling. It was plainly a great house, and my uncle lived there in style. The fame of it rose as we approached, like a chain of mountains; at Bedford they touched their caps, but in Dunstable they crawled upon their bellies. I thought the landlady would have kissed me; such a flutter of cordiality, such smiles, such affectionate attentions were called forth, and the good lady bustled on my service in such a poth of ringlets and with such a jingling of keys. "You're probably expected, sir, at the Place? I do trust you may 'ave better accounts of his lordship's 'elth, sir. We understood that his lordship, Mosha de Carwell, was main bad. Ha, sir, we shall all feel his loss, poor, dear, noble gentleman; and I'm sure nobody more polite! They do say, sir, his wealth is enormous, and before the Revolution quite a prince in his own country! But I beg your pardon, sir; 'ow I do run on, to be sure; and doubtless all beknown to you already! For you do resemble the family, sir. I should have known you anywheres by the likeness to the dear viscount. Ha, poor gentleman, he must 'ave a 'eavy 'eart these days."

In the same place I saw out of the inn windows a man-servant passing in the livery of my house, which you are to think I had never before seen worn, or not

that I could remember. I had often enough, indeed, pictured myself advanced to be a Marshal, a Duke of the Empire, a Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, and some other kickshaws of the kind, with a perfect rout of flunkeys correctly dressed in my own colours. But it is one thing to imagine, and another to see; it would be one thing to have these liveries in a house of my own in Paris—it was quite another to find them flaunting in the heart of hostile England; and I fear I should have made a fool of myself, if the man had not been on the other side of the street, and I at a one-pane window. There was something illusory in this transplantation of the wealth and honours of a family, a thing by its nature so deeply rooted in the soil; something ghostly in this sense of home-coming so far from home.

From Dunstable I rolled away into a crescendo of similar impressions. There are certainly few things to be compared with these castles, or rather country seats, of the English nobility and gentry; nor anything at all to equal the servility of the population that dwells in their neighbourhood. Though I was but driving in a hired chaise, word of my destination seemed to have gone abroad, and the women curtsied and the men louted to me by the wayside. As I came near, I began to appreciate the roots of this widespread respect. The look of my uncle's park wall, even from the outside, had something of a princely character; and when I came in view of the house itself, a sort of madness of vicarious vain-glory struck me dumb and kept me staring. It was about the size of the Tuileries. It faced due north; and the last rays of the sun, that was setting like a red-hot shot amidst a tumultuous gathering of snow clouds, were reflected on the endless rows of windows. A portico of Doric columns adorned the front, and would have done honour to a temple. The servant who received me at the door was civil to a fault—I had almost said, to offence; and the hall to which he admitted me through a pair of glass doors was warmed and already partly lighted by a liberal chimney heaped with the roots of beeches.

"Vicomte Anne de St. Yves," said I, in answer to the man's question; whereupon he bowed before me lower still, and stepping upon one side introduced me to the truly awful presence of the major domo. I have seen many dignitaries in my time, but none who quite equalled this eminent being. He was great, he was good, he was sleek, he was obsequious, he had not an "h" in his composition, and with all these qualities he was yet good enough to answer to the unassuming name of Dawson. From him I learned that my uncle was extremely low, a doctor in close attendance, Mr. Romaine expected at any moment, and that my cousin, the Vicomte de St. Yves, had been sent for the same morning.

"It was a sudden seizure, then?" I asked.

Well, he would scarcely go as far as that. It was a decline, a fading away, sir; but he was certainly too: bad the day before, had sent for Mr. Romaine, and the major domo had taken it on himself a little later to send word to the Viscount. "It seemed to me, my lord," said he, "as if this was a time when all the family should be called together."

I approved him with my lips, but not in my heart. Dawson was plainly in the interests of my cousin.

"And when can I expect to see my great-uncle the Count?" said I.

In the evening, I was told: in the meantime he would show me to my room, which had been long prepared for me, and I should be expected to dine in about an hour with the doctor, if my lordship had no objections.

My lordship had not the faintest.

"At the same time," I said, "I have had an accident: I have unhappily lost

my baggage, and am here in what I stand in. I don't know if the doctor be a formalist, but it is quite impossible I should appear at table as I ought."

He begged me to be under no anxiety. "We have been long expecting you," said he. "All is ready."

Such I found to be the truth. A great room had been prepared for me; through the mullioned windows the last flicker of the winter sunset interchanged with the reverberation of a royal fire; the bed was open, a suit of evening clothes was airing before the blaze, and from the far corner a boy came forward with deprecatory smiles. The dream in which I had been moving seemed to have reached its pitch. I might have quitted this house and room only the night before; it was my own place that I had come to; and for the first time in my life I understood the force of the words home and welcome.

"This will be all as you would want, sir?" said Mr. Dawson. "This 'ere boy, Rowley, we place entirely at your disposition. 'E's not exactly a trained vallet, but Mossho Powl, the Viscount's gentleman, 'ave give him the benefick of a few lessons, and it is 'oped that he may give sitisfaction. Hanythink that you may require, if you will be so good as to mention the same to Rowley, I will make it my business myself, sir, to see you sitisfied."

So saying, the eminent and already detested Mr. Dawson took his departure, and I was left alone with Rowley. A man who may be said to have wakened to consciousness in the prison of the Abbaye, among those ever graceful and ever tragic figures of the brave and fair, awaiting the hour of the guillotine and denuded of every comfort, I had never known the luxuries or the amenities of my rank in life. To be attended on by servants I had only been accustomed to in inns. My toilet had long been military, to a moment, at the note of a bugle, too often at a ditch-side. And it need not be wondered at if I looked on my new valet with a certain diffidence. But I remembered that if he was my first experience of a valet, I was his first trial of a master. Cheered by which consideration, I demanded my bath in a style of good assurance. There was a bath-room contiguous; in an incredibly short space of time the hot water was ready; and soon after, arrayed in a shawl dressing-gown, and in a luxury of contentment and comfort, I was reclined in an easy-chair before the mirror, while Rowley, with a mixture of pride and anxiety which I could well understand, laid out his razors.

"Hey, Rowley?" I asked, not quite resigned to go under fire with such an inexperienced commander. "It's all right, is it? You feel pretty sure of your weapons?"

"Yes, my lord," he replied. "It's all right, I assure your lordship."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Rowley, but for the sake of shortness, would you mind not belording me in private?" said I. "It will do very well if you call me Mr. Anne. It is the way of my country, as I daresay you know."

Mr. Rowley looked blank.

"But you're just as much a Viscount as Mr. Powl's, are you not?" he said.

"As Mr. Powl's Viscount?" said I, laughing. "Oh, keep your mind easy, Mr. Rowley's is every bit as good. Only, you see, as I am of the younger line, I bear my Christian name along with the title. Alain is the *Viscount*; I am the *Viscount Anne*. And in giving me the name of Mr. Anne, I assure you you will be quite regular."

"Yes, Mr. Anne," said the docile youth. "But about the shaving, sir, you need be under no alarm. Mr. Powl says I 'ave excellent dispositions."

"Mr. Powl?" said I. "That doesn't seem to me very like a French name."

"No, sir, indeed, my lord," said he, with a burst of confidence. "No, indeed, Mr. Anne, and it do not surely. I should say now, it was more like Mr. Pole."

"And Mr. Powl is the Viscount's man?"

"Yes, Mr. Anne," said he. "He 'ave a hard billet, he do. The Viscount is a very particular gentleman. I don't think as you'll be, Mr. Anne?" he added, with a confidential smile in the mirror.

He was about sixteen, well set up, with a pleasant, merry, freckled face, and a pair of dancing eyes. There was an air at once deprecatory and insinuating about the rascal that I thought I recognised. There came to me from my own boyhood memories of certain passionate admirations long passed away, and the objects of them long ago discredited or dead. I remembered how anxious I had been to serve those fleeting heroes, how readily I told myself I would have died for *them*, how much greater and handsomer than life they had appeared. And looking in the mirror, it seemed to me that I read the face of Rowley, like an echo or a ghost, by the light of my own youth. I have always contended (somewhat against the opinion of my friends) that I am first of all an economist; and the last thing that I would care to throw away is that very valuable piece of property—a boy's hero-worship.

"Why," said I, "you shave like an angel, Mr. Rowley!"

"Thank you, my lord," says he. "Mr. Powl had no fear of me. You may be sure, sir, I should never 'ave had this berth if I 'adn't 'ave been up to Dick. We been expecting of you this month back. My eye! I never see such preparations. Every day the fires has been kep' up, the bed made, and all! As soon as it was known you were coming, sir, I got the appointment; and I've been up and down since then like a Jack-in-the-box. A wheel couldn't sound in the avenue but what I was at the window! I've had a many disappointments; but to-night, as soon as you stepped out of the shay, I knew it was my—it was you. Oh, you had been expected! Why, when I go down to supper, I'll be the 'ero of the servants' all: the 'ole of the staff is that curious!"

"Well," said I, "I hope you may be able to give a fair account of me—sober, steady, industrious, good-tempered, and with a first-rate character from my last place?"

He laughed an embarrassed laugh. "Your hair curls beautiful," he said, by way of changing the subject. "The Viscount's the boy for curls, though; and the richness of it is, Mr. Powl tells me his don't curl no more than that much twine—by nature. Gettin' old, the Viscount is. He 'ave gone the pace, 'aven't 'e, sir?"

"The fact is," said I, "that I know very little about him. Our family has been much divided, and I have been a soldier from a child."

"A soldier, Mr. Anne, sir?" cried Rowley, with a sudden feverish animation. "Was you ever wounded?"

It is contrary to my principles to discourage admiration for myself; and, slipping back the shoulder of the dressing-gown, I silently exhibited the scar which I had received in Edinburgh Castle. He looked at it with awe.

"Lord, now! Was that from a Frenchman?" he inquired, not very tactfully.

I could truly say it was.

"French steel!" he observed, with a kind of dread gusto; and though I had every reason to believe that the scissors were of English make, I did not judge it politic to enter into a discussion of the point.

"Ah, well!" he continued, "there's where the difference comes in! It's in the

training. The other Viscount have been horse-racing, and dicing, and carrying on all his life. All right enough, no doubt; but what I do say is, that it don't lead to nothink. Whereas——"

"Whereas Mr. Rowley's?" I put in.

"My Viscount?" said he. "Well, sir, I *did* say it; and now that I've seen you, I say it again!"

I could not refrain from smiling at this outburst, and the rascal caught me in the mirror and smiled to me again.

"I'd say it again, Mr. Hanne," he said. "I know which side my bread's buttered. I know when a gen'leman's a gen'leman. Mr. Powl can go to Putney with his one! Beg your pardon, Mr. Anne, for being so familiar," said he, blushing suddenly scarlet. "I was especially warned against it by Mr. Powl."

"Discipline before all," said I. "Follow your front-rank man."

With that, we began to turn our attention to the clothes. I was amazed to find them fit so well: not *à la diable*, in the haphazard manner of a soldier's uniform or a ready-made suit; but with nicety, as a trained artist might rejoice to make them for a favourite subject.

"Tis extraordinary," cried I: "these things fit me perfectly."

"Indeed, Mr. Anne, you two be very much of a shape," said Rowley.

"Who? What two?" said I.

"The Viscount," he said.

"Damnation! Have I the man's clothes on me, too?" cried I.

But Rowley hastened to reassure me. On the first word of my coming, the Count had put the matter of my wardrobe in the hands of his own and my cousin's tailors; and on the rumour of our resemblance, my clothes had been made to Alain's measure.

"But they were all made for you express, Mr. Anne. You may be certain the Count would never do nothing by 'alf: fires kep' burning; the finest of clothes ordered, I'm sure, and a body-servant being trained a-purpose."

"Well," said I, "it's a good fire, and a good set-out of clothes; and what a valet, Mr. Rowley! And there's one thing to be said for my cousin—I mean for Mr. Powl's Viscount—he has a very fair figure."

"Oh, don't you be took in, Mr. Anne," quoth the faithless Rowley: "he has to be hyked into a pair of stays to get them things on!"

"Come, come, Mr. Rowley," said I, "this is telling tales out of school! Do not you be deceived. The greatest men of antiquity, including Cæsar and Hannibal and Pope Joan, may have been very glad, at my time of life or Alain's, to follow his example. 'Tis a misfortune common to all; and really," said I, bowing to myself before the mirror like one who should dance the minuet, "when the result is so successful as this, who would do anything but applaud?"

My toilet concluded, I marched on to fresh surprises. My chamber, my new valet and my new clothes had been beyond hope: the dinner, the soup, the whole bill of fare was a revelation of the powers there are in man. I had not supposed it lay in the genius of any cook to create, out of common beef and mutton, things so different and dainty. The wine was of a piece, the doctor a most agreeable companion; nor could I help reflecting on the prospect that all this wealth, comfort and handsome profusion might still very possibly become mine. Here were a change indeed, from the common soldier and the camp kettle, the prisoner and his prison rations, the fugitive and the horrors of the covered cart!



G. GREENVILLE MANNING

" 'Tis extraordinary; these things fit me perfectly."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DESPATCH-BOX.

THE doctor had scarce finished his meal before he hastened with an apology to attend upon his patient; and almost immediately after, I was myself summoned and ushered up the great staircase and along interminable corridors to the bedside of my great-uncle the Count. You are to think that up to the present moment I had not set eyes on this formidable personage, only on the evidences of his wealth and kindness. You are to think besides that I had heard him miscalled and abused from my earliest childhood up. The first of the *émigrés* could never expect a good word in the society in which my father moved. Even yet the reports I received were of a doubtful nature; even Romaine had drawn of him no very amiable portrait; and as I was ushered into the room, it was a critical eye that I cast on my great-uncle. He lay propped on pillows in a little cot no greater than a camp-bed, not visibly breathing. He was about eighty years of age, and looked it; not that his face was much lined, but all the blood and colour seemed to have faded from his body, and even his eyes, which last he kept usually closed as though the light distressed him. There was an unspeakable degree of slyness in his expression, which kept me ill at ease; he seemed to lie there with his arms folded, like a spider waiting for prey. His speech was very deliberate and courteous, but scarce louder than a sigh.

"I bid you welcome, *Monsieur le Vicomte Anne*," said he, looking at me hard with his pale eyes, but not moving on his pillows. "I have sent for you, and I thank you for the obliging expedition you have shown. It is my misfortune that I cannot rise to receive you. I trust you have been reasonably well entertained?"

"*Monsieur mon oncle*," I said, bowing very low, "I am come at the summons of the head of my family."

"It is well," he said. "Be seated. I should be glad to hear some news—of that can be called news that is already twenty years old—of how I have the pleasure to see you here."

By the coldness of his address, not more than by the nature of the times that he bade me recall, I was plunged in melancholy. I felt myself surrounded as with deserts of friendlessness, and the delight of my welcome was turned to ashes in my mouth.

"That is soon told, *monseigneur*," said I. "I understand that I need tell you nothing of the end of my unhappy parents? It is only the story of the lost dog."

"You are right. I am sufficiently informed of that deplorable affair; it is painful to me. My nephew, your father, was a man who would not be advised," said he. "Tell me, if you please, simply of yourself."

"I am afraid I must run the risk of harrowing your sensibility in the beginning," said I, with a bitter smile, "because my story begins at the foot of the guillotine. When the list came out that night, and her name was there, I was already old enough, not in years but in sad experience, to understand the extent of my misfortune. She——" I paused. "Enough that she arranged with a friend, Madame de Chasseradès, that she should take charge of me, and by the favour of our jailors I was suffered to remain in the shelter of the *Abbaye*. That was my only refuge; there was no corner of France that I could rest the sole of my foot upon except the prison. Monsieur le Comte, you are as well aware as I can be what kind of a life that was, and how swiftly death smote in that society. I did

not wait long before the name of Madame de Chasseradès succeeded to that of my mother on the list. She passed me on to Madame de Noytot; she, in her turn, to Mademoiselle de Braye; and there were others. I was the one thing permanent; they were all transient as clouds; a day or two of their care, and then came the last farewell and—somewhere far off in that roaring Paris that surrounded us—the bloody scene. I was the cherished one, the last comfort, of these dying women. I have been in pitched fights, my lord, and I never knew such courage. It was all done smiling, in the tone of good society; *belle maman* was the name I was taught to give to each; and for a day or two the new ‘pretty mamma’ would make much of me, show me off, teach me the minuet, and to say my prayers; and then, with a tender embrace, would go the way of her predecessors, smiling. There were some that wept too. There was a childhood! All the time Monsieur de Culemburg kept his eye on me, and would have had me out of the *Abbaye* and in his own protection, but my ‘pretty mammas’ one after another resisted the idea. Where could I be safer? they argued; and what was to become of them without the darling of the prison? Well, it was soon shown how safe I was! The dreadful day of the massacre came; the prison was overrun; none paid attention to me, not even the last of my ‘pretty mammas,’ for she had met another fate. I was wandering distracted, when I was found by some one in the interests of Monsieur de Culemburg. I understand he was sent on purpose; I believe, in order to reach the interior of the prison, he had set his hand to nameless barbarities: such was the price paid for my worthless, whimpering little life! He gave me his hand; it was wet, and mine was reddened; he led me unresisting. I remember but the one circumstance of my flight—it was my last view of my last pretty mamma. Shall I describe it to you?” I asked the Count, with a sudden fierceness.

“Avoid unpleasant details,” observed my great-uncle, gently.

At these words a sudden peace fell upon me. I had been angry with the man before; I had not sought to spare him; and now, in a moment, I saw that there was nothing to spare. Whether from natural heartlessness or extreme old age, the soul was not at home; and my benefactor, who had kept the fire lit in my room for a month past—my only relative except Alain, whom I knew already to be a hired spy—had trodden out the last sparks of hope and interest.

“Certainly,” said I; “and, indeed, the day for them is nearly over. I was taken to Monsieur de Culemburg’s,—I presume, sir, that you know the Abbé de Culemburg?”

He indicated assent without opening his eyes.

“He was a very brave and a very learned man——”

“And a very holy one,” said my uncle civilly.

“And a very holy one, as you observe,” I continued. “He did an infinity of good, and through all the Terror kept himself from the guillotine. He gave me such education as I have—enough for a soldier. It was in his house in the country at Dammarie, near Melun, that I made the acquaintance of your agent, Mr. Vicary, who lay there in hiding, only to fall a victim at the last to a gang of *chauffeurs*.”

“This poor Mr. Vicary!” observed my uncle. “He had been many times in my interests to France, and this was his first failure. *Quel charmant homme, n’est-ce pas?*”

“Infinitely so,” said I. “But I would not willingly detain you any farther with a story, the details of which it must naturally be more or less unpleasant for you to hear. Suffice it that, by M. de Culemburg’s advice, I entered the service

of France at sixteen, and have since then carried arms in such a manner as not to disgrace my family."

"You narrate well; *vous avez la voix chaude*," said my uncle, turning on his pillows as if to study me. "I have a very good account of you by Monsieur de Mauséant, whom you helped in Spain. And you had some education from the Abbé de Culemborg, a man of a good house? Yes, you will do very well. You have a good manner and a handsome person, which hurts nothing. We are all handsome in the family; even I myself, I have had my successes, the memories of which still charm me. It is my intention, my nephew, to make of you my heir. I am not very well content with my other nephew, Monsieur le Vicomte: he has not been respectful, which is the flattery due to age. And there are other matters."

I was half tempted to throw back in his face that inheritance so coldly offered. At the same time I had to consider that he was an old man, and, after all, my relation; and that I was a poor one, in considerable straits, with a hope at heart which that inheritance might yet enable me to realise. Nor could I forget that, however icy his manners, he had behaved to me from the first with the extreme of liberality and—I was about to write, kindness, but the word, in that connection, would not come. I really owed the man some measure of gratitude, which it would be an ill manner to repay if I were to insult him on his deathbed.

"Your will, monsieur, must ever be my rule," said I, bowing.

"You have wit, *monsieur mon neveu*," said he, "the best wit—the wit of silence. Many might have deafened me with their gratitude. Gratitude!" he repeated, with a peculiar intonation, and lay and smiled to himself. "But to approach what is more important. As a prisoner of war, will it be possible for you to be served heir to English estates? I have no idea: long as I have dwelt in England, I have never studied what they call their laws. On the other hand, how if Romaine should come too late? I have two pieces of business to be transacted—to die, and to make my will; and, however desirous I may be to serve you, I cannot postpone the first in favour of the second beyond a very few hours."

"Well, sir, I must then contrive to be doing as I did before," said I.

"Not so," said the Count. "I have an alternative. I have just drawn my balance at my banker's, a considerable sum, and I am now to place it in your hands. It will be so much for you and so much less—" he paused, and smiled with an air of malignity that surprised me. "But it is necessary it should be done before witnesses. *Monsieur le Vicomte* is of a particular disposition, and an unwitnessed donation may very easily be twisted into a theft."

He touched a bell, which was answered by a man having the appearance of a confidential valet. To him he gave a key.

"Bring me the despatch-box that came yesterday, La Ferrière," said he. "You will at the same time present my compliments to Dr. Hunter and M. l'Abbé, and request them to step for a few moments to my room."

The despatch-box proved to be rather a bulky piece of baggage, covered with Russia leather. Before the doctor and an excellent old smiling priest it was passed over into my hands with a very clear statement of the disposer's wishes; immediately after which, though the witnesses remained behind to draw up and sign a joint note of the transaction, Monsieur de Kéroual dismissed me to my own room, La Ferrière following with the invaluable box.

At my chamber door I took it from him with thanks, and entered alone. Everything had been already disposed for the night, the curtains drawn and the fire trimmed; and Rowley was still busy with my bedclothes. He turned round as I entered with a look of welcome that did my heart good. Indeed, I had

never a much greater need of human sympathy, however trivial, than at that moment when I held a fortune in my arms. In my uncle's room I had breathed the very atmosphere of disenchantment. He had gorged my pockets; he had starved every dignified or affectionate sentiment of a man. I had received so chilling an impression of age and experience that the mere look of youth drew me to confide in Rowley: he was only a boy, his heart must beat yet, he must still retain some innocence and natural feelings, he could blurt out follies with his mouth, he was not a machine to utter perfect speech! At the same time, I was beginning to outgrow the painful impressions of my interview; my spirits were beginning to revive; and at the jolly, empty looks of Mr. Rowley, as he ran forward to relieve me of the box, St. Ives became himself again.

"Now, Rowley, don't be in a hurry," said I. "This is a momentous juncture. Man and boy, you have been in my service about three hours. You must already have observed that I am a gentleman of a somewhat morose disposition, and there is nothing that I more dislike than the smallest appearance of familiarity. Mr. Pole or Mr. Powl, probably in the spirit of prophecy, warned you against this danger."

"Yes, Mr. Anne," said Rowley blankly.

"Now there has just arisen one of those rare cases, in which I am willing to depart from my principles. My uncle has given me a box—what you would call a Christmas box. I don't know what's in it, and no more do you: perhaps I am an April fool, or perhaps I am already enormously wealthy; there might be five hundred pounds in this apparently harmless receptacle!"

"Lord, Mr. Anne!" cried Rowley.

"Now, Rowley, hold up your right hand and repeat the words of the oath after me," said I, laying the despatch-box on the table. "Strike me blue if I ever disclose to Mr. Powl, or Mr. Powl's Viscount, or anything that is Mr. Powl's, not to mention Mr. Dawson and the doctor, the treasures of the following despatch-box; and strike me sky-blue scarlet if I do not continually maintain, uphold, love, honour and obey, serve, and follow to the four corners of the earth and the waters that are under the earth, the hereinafter before-mentioned (only that I find I have neglected to mention him) Viscount Anne de Kéroual de St.-Yves, commonly known as Mr. Rowley's Viscount. So be it. Amen."

He took the oath with the same exaggerated seriousness as I gave it to him.

"Now," said I. "Here is the key for you; I will hold the lid with both hands in the meanwhile." He turned the key. "Bring up all the candles in the room, and range them alongside. What is it to be? A live gorgon, a Jack-in-the-box, or a spring that fires a pistol? On your knees, sir, before the prodigy!"

So saying, I turned the despatch-box upside down upon the table. At the sight of the vast mass of bank paper and gold that lay in front of us, between the candles, or rolled upon the floor alongside, I stood astonished.

"Oh Lord!" cried Mr. Rowley; "oh Lordy, Lordy, Lord!" and he scrambled after the fallen guineas. "Oh my, Mr. Anne! what a sight o' money! Why, it's like a blessed story-book. It's like the Forty Thieves."

"Now, Rowley, let's be cool, let's be businesslike," said I. "Riches are deceitful, particularly when you haven't counted them; and the first thing we have to do is to arrive at the amount of my—let me say, modest competency. If I'm not mistaken, I have enough here to keep you in gold buttons all the rest of your life. You collect the gold, and I'll take the paper."

Accordingly, down we sat together on the hearthrug, and for some time there was no sound but the creasing of bills and the jingling of guineas, broken occasionally by the exulting exclamations of Rowley. The arithmetical operation



on which we were embarked took long, and it might have been tedious to others ; not to me nor to my helper.

"Ten thousand pounds !" I announced at last.

"Ten thousand !" echoed Mr. Rowley.

And we gazed upon each other.

The greatness of this fortune took my breath away. With that sum in my hands, I need fear no enemies. People are arrested, in nine cases out of ten, not because the police are astute, but because themselves run short of money ; and I had here before me in the despatch-box a succession of devices and disguises that insured my liberty. Not only so ; but, as I felt with a sudden and overpowering thrill, with ten thousand pounds in my hands I was become an eligible suitor. What advances I had made in the past, as a private soldier in a military prison, or a fugitive by the wayside, could only be qualified or, indeed, excused as acts of desperation. And now, I might come in by the front door ; I might approach the dragon with a lawyer at my elbow, and rich settlements to offer. The poor French prisoner, Champdivers, might be in a perpetual danger of arrest ; but the rich travelling Englishman, St-Ives, in his post-chaise, with his despatch-box

by his side, could smile at fate and laugh at locksmiths. I repeated the proverb, exulting, *Love laughs at locksmiths!* In a moment, by the mere coming of this money, my love had become possible—it had come near, it was under my hand—and it may be by one of the curiosities of human nature, but it burned that instant brighter.

“Rowley,” said I, “your Viscount is a made man.”

“Why, we both are, sir,” said Rowley.

“Yes, both,” said I; “and you shall dance at the wedding;” and I flung at his head a bundle of bank notes, and had just followed it up with a handful of guineas, when the door opened, and Mr. Romaine appeared upon the threshold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. ROMAINE CALLS ME NAMES.

FEELING very much of a fool to be thus taken by surprise, I scrambled to my feet and hastened to make my visitor welcome. He did not refuse me his hand; but he gave it with a coldness and distance for which I was quite unprepared, and his countenance, as he looked on me, was marked in a strong degree with concern and severity.

“So, sir, I find you here?” said he, in tones of little encouragement. “Is that you, George? You can run away; I have business with your master.”

He showed Rowley out, and locked the door behind him. Then he sat down in an armchair on one side of the fire, and looked at me with uncompromising sternness.

“I am hesitating how to begin,” said he. “In this singular labyrinth of blunders and difficulties that you have prepared for us, I am positively hesitating where to begin. It will perhaps be best that you should read, first of all, this paragraph.” And he handed over to me a newspaper.

The paragraph in question was brief. It announced the recapture of one of the prisoners recently escaped from Edinburgh Castle; gave his name, Clausel, and added that he had entered into the particulars of the recent revolting murder in the Castle, and denounced the murderer:—

“It is a common soldier called Champdivers, who had himself escaped, and is in all probability involved in the common fate of his comrades. In spite of the activity along all the Forth and the East Coast, nothing has yet been seen of the sloop which these desperadoes seized at Grangemouth, and it is now almost certain that they have found a watery grave.”

At the reading of this paragraph my heart turned over. In a moment I saw my castle in the air ruined; myself changed from a mere military fugitive into a hunted murderer, fleeing from the gallows; my love, which had a moment since appeared so near to me, blotted from the field of possibility. Despair, which was my first sentiment, did not, however, endure for more than a moment. I saw that my companions had indeed succeeded in their unlikely design; and that I was supposed to have accompanied and perished along with them by shipwreck—a most probable ending to their enterprise. If they thought me at the bottom of the North Sea, I need not fear much vigilance on the streets of Edinburgh. Champdivers was wanted: what was to connect him with St-Ives? Major Chevenix would recognise me if he met me; that was beyond bargaining: he had seen me so often, his interest had been kindled to so high a point, that I could hope

to deceive him by no stratagem of disguise. Well, even so; he would have a competition of testimony before him: he knew Clausel, he knew me, and I was sure he would decide for honour. At the same time, the image of Flora shot up in my mind's eye with such a radiancy as fairly overwhelmed all other considerations; the blood sprang to every corner of my body, and I vowed I would see and win her, if it cost my neck.

"Very annoying, no doubt," said I, as I returned the paper to Mr. Romaine.

"Is annoying your word for it?" said he.

"Exasperating, if you like," I admitted.

"And true?" he inquired.

"Well, true in a sense," said I. "But perhaps I had better answer that question by putting you in possession of the facts?"

"I think so, indeed," said he.

I narrated to him as much as seemed necessary of the quarrel, the duel, the death of Goguelat, and the character of Clausel. He heard me through in a forbidding silence, nor did he at all betray the nature of his sentiments, except that, at the episode of the scissors, I could observe his mulberry face to turn three shades paler.

"I suppose I may believe you?" said he, when I had done.

"Or else conclude this interview," said I.

"Can you not understand that we are here discussing matters of the gravest import? Can you not understand that I feel myself weighed with a load of responsibility on your account—that you should take this occasion to air your fire-eating manners against your own attorney? There are serious hours in life, Mr. Anne," he said severely. "A capital charge, and that of a very brutal character and with singularly unpleasant details; the presence of the man Clausel, who (according to your account of it) is actuated by sentiments of real malignity, and prepared to swear black white; all the other witnesses scattered and perhaps drowned at sea; the natural prejudice against a Frenchman and a runaway prisoner: this makes a serious total for your lawyer to consider, and is by no means lessened by the incurable folly and levity of your own disposition."

"I beg your pardon!" said I.

"Oh, my expressions have been selected with scrupulous accuracy," he replied. "How did I find you, sir, when I came to announce this catastrophe? You were sitting on the hearthrug playing, like a silly baby, with a servant, were you not, and the floor all scattered with gold and bank paper? There was a tableau for you! It was I who came, and you were lucky in that. It might have been any one—your cousin as well as another."

"You have me there, sir," I admitted. "I had neglected all precautions, and you do right to be angry. *Apropos*, Mr. Romaine, how did you come yourself, and how long have you been in the house?" I added, surprised, on the retrospect, not to have heard him arrive.

"I drove up in a chaise and pair," he returned. "Any one might have heard me. But you were not listening, I suppose? being so extremely at your ease in the very house of your enemy, and under a capital charge! And I have been long enough here to do your business for you. Ah, yes, I did it, God forgive me!—did it before I so much as asked you the explanation of the paragraph. For some time back the will has been prepared; now it is signed; and your uncle has heard nothing of your recent piece of activity. Why? Well, I had no fancy to bother him on his death-bed: you might be innocent; and at bottom I preferred the murderer to the spy."

No doubt of it but the man played a friendly part; no doubt also that, in his ill-temper and anxiety, he expressed himself unpalatably.

"You will perhaps find me over-delicate," said I. "There is a word you employed——"

"I employ the words of my brief, sir," he cried, striking with his hand on the newspaper. "It is there in six letters. And do not be so certain—you have not stood your trial yet. It is an ugly affair, a fishy business. It is highly disagreeable. I would give my hand off—I mean I would give a hundred pound down, to have nothing to do with it. And, situated as we are, we must at once take action. There is here no choice. You must first of all quit this country, and get to France, or Holland, or, indeed, to Madagascar."

"There may be two words to that," said I.

"Not so much as one syllable!" he retorted. "Here is no room for argument. The case is nakedly plain. In the disgusting position in which you have found means to place yourself, all that is to be hoped for is delay. A time may come when we shall be able to do better. It cannot be now: now it would be the gibbet."

"You labour under a false impression, Mr. Romaine," said I. "I have no impatience to figure in the dock. I am even as anxious as yourself to postpone my first appearance there. On the other hand, I have not the slightest intention of leaving this country, where I please myself extremely. I have a good address, a ready tongue, an English accent that passes, and, thanks to the generosity of my uncle, as much money as I want. It would be hard indeed if, with all these advantages, Mr. St. Ives should not be able to live quietly in a private lodging, while the authorities amuse themselves by looking for Champdivers. You forget, there is no connection between these two personages."

"And you forget your cousin," retorted Romaine. "There is the link. There is the tongue of the buckle. He knows you are Champdivers." He put up his hand as if to listen. "And, for a wager, here he is himself!" he exclaimed.

As when a tailor takes a piece of goods upon his counter, and rends it across, there came to our ears from the avenue the long tearing sound of a chaise and four approaching at the top speed of the horses. And, looking out between the curtains, we beheld the lamps skimming on the smooth ascent.

"Ay," said Romaine, wiping the window-pane that he might see more clearly. "Ay, that is he, by the driving! So he squanders money along the king's highway, the triple idiot! gorging every man he meets with gold for the pleasure of arriving—where? Ah, yes, where but a debtor's jail, if not a criminal prison!"

"Is he that kind of a man?" I asked, staring on these lamps as though I could decipher in them the secret of my cousin's character.

"You will find him a dangerous kind," answered the lawyer. "For you, these are the lights on a lee shore! I find I fall in a muse when I consider of him; what a formidable being he once was, and what a personable! and how near he draws to the moment that must break him utterly! We none of us like him here; we hate him, rather; and yet I have a sense—I don't think at my time of life it can be pity—but a reluctance rather, to break anything so big and figurative, as though he were a big porcelain pot or a big picture of high price. Ay, there is what I was waiting for!" he cried, as the lights of a second chaise swam in sight. "It is he beyond a doubt. The first was the signature and the next the flourish. Two chaises, the second following with the baggage, which is always copious and ponderous, and one of his valets: he cannot go a step without a valet."

"I hear you repeat the word big," said I. "But it cannot be that he is anything out of the way in stature."

"No," said the attorney. "About your height, as I guessed for the tailors, and I see nothing wrong with the result. But, somehow, he commands an atmosphere; he has a spacious manner; and he has kept up, all through life, such a volume of racket about his personality, with his chaises and his racers and his dicings, and I know not what—that somehow he imposes! It seems, when the farce is done, and he locked in the Fleet prison—and nobody left but Bonaparté and Lord Wellington and the Hetman Platoff to make a work about—the world will be in a comparison quite tranquil. But this is beside the mark," he added, with an effort, turning again from the window. "We are now under fire, Mr Anne, as you soldiers would say, and it is high time we should prepare to go into action. He must not see you; that would be fatal. All that he knows at present is that you resemble him, and that is much more than enough. If it were possible, it would be well he should not know you were in the house."

"Quite impossible, depend upon it," said I. "Some of the servants are directly in his interests, perhaps in his pay: Dawson, for an example."

"My own idea!" cried Romaine. "And at least," he added, as the first of the chaises drew up with a dash in front of the portico, "it is now too late. Here he is."

We stood listening, with a strange anxiety, to the various noises that awoke in the silent house: the sound of doors opening and closing, the sound of feet near at hand and farther off. It was plain the arrival of my cousin was a matter of moment, almost of parade, to the household. And suddenly, out of this confused and distant bustle, a rapid and light tread became distinguishable. We heard it come upstairs, draw near along the corridor, pause at the door, and a stealthy and hasty rapping succeeded.

"Mr. Anne—Mr. Anne, sir! Let me in!" said the voice of Rowley.

We admitted the lad, and locked the door again behind him.

"It's *him*, sir," he panted. "He've come."

"You mean the Viscount?" said I. "So we supposed. But come, Rowley—out with the rest of it! You have more to tell us, or your face belies you!"

"Mr. Anne, I do," he said. "Mr. Romaine, sir, you're a friend of his, ain't you?"

"Yes, George, I am a friend of his," said Romaine, and, to my great surprise, laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"Well, it's this way," said Rowley—"Mr. Powl have been at me! It's to play the spy! I thought he was at it from the first! From the first I see what he was after—coming round and round, and hinting things! But to-night he outs with it plump! I'm to let him hear all what you're to do beforehand, he says; and he give me this for an arnest"—holding up half a guinea; "and I took it, so I did! Strike me sky-blue scarlet!" says he, adducing the words of the mock oath; and he looked askance at me as he did so.

I saw that he had forgotten himself, and that he knew it. The expression of his eye changed almost in the passing of the glance from the significant to the appealing—from the look of an accomplice to that of a culprit; and from that moment he became the model of a well-drilled valet.

"Sky-blue scarlet?" repeated the lawyer. "Is the fool delirious?"

"No," said I; "he is only reminding me of something."

"Well—and I believe the fellow will be faithful," said Romaine. "So you are a friend of Mr. Anne's, too?" he added to Rowley.

"If you please, sir," said Rowley.

"'Tis something sudden," observed Romaine; "but it may be genuine enough.

I believe him to be honest. He comes of honest people. Well, George Rowley, you might embrace some early opportunity to earn that half-guinea, by telling Mr. Powl that your master will not leave here till noon to-morrow, if he go even then. Tell him there are a hundred things to be done here, and a hundred more that can only be done properly at my office in Holborn. Come to think of it—we had better see to that first of all," he went on, unlocking the door. "Get hold of Powl, and see. And be quick back, and clear me up this mess."

Mr. Rowley was no sooner gone than the lawyer took a pinch of snuff, and regarded me with somewhat of a more genial expression.

"Sir," said he, "it is very fortunate for you that your face is so strong a letter of recommendation. Here am I, a tough old practitioner, mixing myself up with your very distressing business; and here is this farmer's lad, who has the wit to take a bribe and the loyalty to come and tell you of it—all, I take it, on the strength of your appearance. I wish I could imagine how it would impress a jury!" says he.

"And how it would affect the hangman, sir?" I asked.

"*Absit omen!*" said Mr. Romaine devoutly.

We were just so far in our talk, when I heard a sound that brought my heart into my mouth: the sound of some one slyly trying the handle of the door. It had been preceded by no audible footstep. Since the departure of Rowley our wing of the house had been entirely silent. And we had every right to suppose ourselves alone, and to conclude that the new-comer, whoever he might be, was come on a clandestine, if not a hostile, errand.

"Who is there?" asked Romaine.

"It's only me, sir," said the soft voice of Dawson. "It's the Viscount, sir. He is very desirous to speak with you on business."

"Tell him I shall come shortly, Dawson," said the lawyer. "I am at present engaged."

"Thank you, sir!" said Dawson.



"The sound of some one slyly trying the handle of the door."

And we heard his feet draw off slowly along the corridor.

"Yes," said Mr. Romaine, speaking low, and maintaining the attitude of one intently listening, "there is another foot. I cannot be deceived!"

"I think there was indeed!" said I. "And what troubles me—I am not sure that the other has gone entirely away. By the time it got the length of the head of the stair the tread was plainly single."

"Ahem—blockaded?" asked the lawyer.

"A siege *en règle*!" I exclaimed.

"Let us come farther from the door," said Romaine, "and reconsider this damnable position. Without doubt, Alain was this moment at the door. He hoped to enter and get a view of you, as if by accident. Baffled in this, has he stayed himself, or has he planted Dawson here by way of sentinel?"

"Himself, beyond a doubt," said I. "And yet to what end? He cannot think to pass the night there!"

"If it were only possible to pay no heed!" said Mr. Romaine. "But this is the accursed drawback of your position. We can do nothing openly. I must smuggle you out of this room and out of this house like seizable goods; and how am I to set about it with a sentinel planted at your very door?"

"There is no good in being agitated," said I.

"None at all," he acquiesced. "And, come to think of it, it is droll enough that I should have been that very moment commenting on your personal appearance, when your cousin came upon this mission. I was saying, if you remember, that your face was as good or better than a letter of recommendation. I wonder if M. Alain would be like the rest of us—I wonder what he would think of it?"

Mr. Romaine was sitting in a chair by the fire with his back to the windows, and I was myself kneeling on the hearthrug and beginning mechanically to pick up the scattered bills, when a honeyed voice joined suddenly in our conversation.

"He thinks well of it, Mr. Romaine. He begs to join himself to that circle of admirers which you indicate to exist already."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(To be continued.)

